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POINCARÉ  
A BIOGRAPHICAL  
PORTRAIT . . . .

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POINCARÉ

A BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAIT

*By* SISLEY HUDDLESTON

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## PREFACE

IN this biographical portrait of Monsieur Poincaré I have perhaps treated the man who has more greatly influenced the course of events in Europe since the war—and perhaps before the war—than any other Continental statesman, more sympathetically than is customary to-day either in England or in the United States.

I make no apology, for the only purpose of such a study is to explain the sitter, and it is impossible to explain him without sympathy. This does not mean that I have taken M. Poincaré's point of view as against the British or American point of view. It will be found that where I feel it necessary to condemn I have condemned without qualification; and that on essential matters.

But I have also condemned what appear to me to be the faults of British and American diplomacy. Our tactics have been frankly bad, and I have not hesitated to show where, in my opinion, we have been wrong in our attitude towards M. Poincaré, who, after all, represented the French people. It is foolish to attempt to differentiate between M. Poincaré and the French people as though the French people were entirely right and M. Poincaré entirely wrong. Could such a dividing line be drawn, M. Poincaré would not have remained Prime Minister for nearly two and a half years.

I have set down naught in malice nor aught extenuated, but I find myself unable to accept the

## *Poincaré : A Biographical Portrait*

full British case without critical comment. Surely it is for an American to criticise American policy, an Englishman to criticise English policy, a Frenchman to criticise French policy.

The responsibility for the present condition of Europe does not fall solely upon a single country nor upon a single man. We must all bear our share of blame. Nothing is more to be deprecated than the tendency which is so marked to-day to blame only the other country. That is a sign of weakness. The strong man (or the strong country) looks primarily for the flaws in his own reasoning and in his own conduct.

When I published a book on the Peace Conference in 1919, the *Spectator* described me as a Francophobe. The accusation was untrue, and I now somewhat fear that the *Spectator* will regard me as a Francophile. But I have not shifted from the position which I took up immediately after the signing of the lamentable Treaty of Versailles. I was then in a minority, opposed to the astronomical demands for reparations which the majority of people believed that Germany could pay, as though the Germans were a race of supermen who, after a devastating war, from which France, England and America found it difficult to recover, would not only be able to recover themselves immediately but could aid enormously in the recovery of all the countries which had been engaged in the war.

Now I am once more in a minority in believing that at all costs the Entente between France and England must be maintained, that while they continue to tug in different directions there can be no peace and prosperity in Europe.

When I was persuaded, somewhat reluctantly, to abandon my journalistic work for the *Observer*, the *Westminster Gazette* and the *New Statesman* in England,



## Preface

and for the *New Republic*, the *Atlantic Monthly* and other publications in America, to become the Paris correspondent of *The Times*, I had a twofold purpose. There were a number of English newspapers which were perfectly reasonable about reparations but were becoming more and more anti-French. There were, on the other hand, a number of English newspapers which were entirely unreasonable about reparations but exceedingly friendly towards France.

It appeared to me that it was desirable to combine reasonableness about reparations with friendliness towards France. Unfortunately, while the whole of England has now been converted to a more realistic conception of reparation possibilities, there has grown up an utter aversion to France. This is particularly unfortunate, for the more we oppose France the more unreasonable, as we would say, France becomes. Any transference of our hatred from Germany to France is to be deplored.

Our policy has been far from tactful. Better results would have been achieved had we been more longsuffering, had we refrained from pinpricks, had we been firm and frank but sympathetically persuasive.

Now that we have a Labour Government in England, it is not yet perhaps too late, but in any case the alternative to Franco-British agreement is, as I see it, a general catastrophe from which England will not escape. But this is not meant to be a polemical book. It is meant to show M. Poincaré as he is and to describe the events which have brought us to the present pass.

International politics are not, as is sometimes supposed, dry and difficult. Diplomacy is not a mysterious profession. The drama of these days is intensely thrilling and is essentially human. There is no more fascinating study. There is nothing

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which affects us all as individuals more nearly than the fate of nations.

The decision of a single man produces a million dramas and deflects the lives of hundreds of millions. We can best understand what is taking place around us by striving to understand the few men who in these days of democracy truly make history.

S. H.

PARIS,  
*March 1924.*

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POINCARÉ, RAYMOND, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, France, since 1922 ; Member of the French Academy, 1909 ; Lord Rector, Glasgow University, 1914 ; Avocat à la Cour de Paris ; Sénateur de la Meuse. Born Bar-le-Duc, 20 August 1860 ; married Henriette Benucci. Educated : Lycée de Bar-le-Duc ; Lycée Louis-le-Grand. Ministre de l'Instruction Publique, 1893 and 1895 ; des Finances, 1894 and 1906 ; French Premier, 1911-1913 ; President of the French Republic, 1913-1920. Publications : *Idées Contemporaines* ; *Etudes et Figures Politiques* ; *How France is Governed*, 1913 ; *Histoire Politique : Chroniques de la Quinzaine*, 1920-1922 ; *Les Origines de la Guerre*, 1921, etc.



# POINCARÉ: A BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAIT

## CHAPTER I

### THE ENIGMA

FOR most people in England and America Monsieur Raymond Poincaré remains an enigma. No man has been more discussed. Much has been written about him. He has expressed himself more frequently than almost any statesman of any age, but nevertheless the world is puzzled.

What is behind his apparently straightforward statements? What deep design does he conceal? Is there not an occult policy which the public policy merely hides? What manner of man is he who has dominated European diplomacy for more than a decade, and in 1923 and 1924 reached the apogee of his power?

It is to answer these questions that this book is written. There is much misunderstanding about the man who will be remembered as Poincaré-La Ruhr; and because he keeps his counsel and has no confidants he is scarcely known at all, even in France. Nobody of his eminence has ever been so self-contained, so self-reliant and so silent on the essential things. If he speaks much he says little. One feels the mystery of the man. No one has been more hated, and no one who has established himself in

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such a predominant position dependent upon the goodwill and the trust of the public has been less loved. In many ways he is a paradox. With excessive timidity he has accomplished the boldest things. With an insistence on the virtue of moderation he has in despite of the whole world pursued his policy to extremes.

Before he entered the Ruhr the sceptics declared that his magazine and newspaper articles could never result in any action. They pointed out that although M. Poincaré is a great advocate he had never in his life actually performed anything. He was too old, it was said, to change his habits. Perhaps the secret of it all is that M. Poincaré became the prisoner of his own propaganda. He did not wish to do the things which he has done. He would have preferred to remain the barrister pleading a case. He was not cast for the part of bailiff executing his own policy. But events have been too much for him. By dint of constantly expounding his views concerning the application of the Peace Treaty, and perhaps its extension, he came to have a fixed idea. Nothing is more monotonous than a speech of M. Poincaré on the political situation if one has read his previous speeches. The man of words became the man of deeds because he could not help himself. The public opinion which he had created drove him on. It was the Frankenstein's monster which he had himself constructed. Indecision battered itself to decision.

There has been recalled that excellent if somewhat apocryphal story of M. Loubet awakening on the morning after he ceased to be President, reaching out for his slippers, and exclaiming feelingly, "Ah, le pauvre Fallières!" It might have been thought that M. Poincaré, after serving the French Republic as President for seven years—and what terrible



years!—would have been content to have taken his ease. But he did not shrink from the new task which awaited him. He did not ask for leisure and repose. The key-note of his character would seem to be that he is avid of work and athirst for power. There is nothing else in the world for him. He believes in himself as the man who is to save France. He saw France through the war; he will now see her through the peace. There is to be no trimming of vines for him.

M. Fallières was glad enough to get back to the Loupillon to watch his crops ripening, to watch them trodden into wine. M. Loubet flits a little grey old ghost about the Paris streets, seldom visiting the glimpses of the Elysée lights. Seven years in the prison of the Presidential palace, is it not enough for anybody? M. Paul Deschanel found one was too much. Of slighter frame, of nervous temperament, taking his Presidential duties too seriously, he quickly succumbed. Monsieur Poincaré alone of the Presidents at the end of their hard years stood firm. M. Poincaré was discontented. M. Poincaré sighed for fresh worlds to conquer.

He has himself said that if he ever writes his memoirs, he will entitle them *Mes Prisons*. He, indeed, is the Silvio Pellico of France. M. Millerand, his successor at the Elysée, tried ineffectually to break out of the cage. And it may well be that, some day, long before the end of his term of office, he will abandon the Presidency.

To realise what M. Poincaré has done, it should be remembered that while all his predecessors have sunk into obscurity, he emerged from the Presidency to begin a new and a more vivid political life. It is difficult when one has stood upon the highest pinnacle for so long to descend to a lower platform, or what is reputed to be a lower platform. Others before

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M. Poincaré believed that after their period of Presidency they were publicly dead ; in a few years have become as remote as Thiers or even as Queen Anne. But M. Poincaré, with his indomitable energy, his unsatisfied ambition, refused to admit that he was dead. He felt himself very much alive. In spite of his official demise, he became the most formidable figure in the French Republic. If one may use an abused word, he became a super-President, a President with more power, more means of action, than he possessed at the Elysée. He wielded an authority that no one else in France has ever enjoyed.

But it is necessary to remove the misconception that M. Poincaré is a new Napoleon. If he resembles Alexander in his insatiable appetite for glory, he remains the most unromantic of bourgeois. It has become the fashion in England to represent Poincaré in a spiked helmet shaking an iron fist. In point of fact, a much better caricature of him would be one in which the silk hat of a Presidential life and the umbrella of the prudential city clerk would figure.

When M. Poincaré came to power in 1922 France had drifted into the most deplorable situation. Whatever may be one's views about France and about the French policy, it would be hard to deny that a bigger, more inconceivable mess could not have been made. If France had surrendered some of her monstrous hypothetical rights, her abdications had not won her the goodwill of the world. On the contrary, every successive surrender of French claims not only weakened the theoretic position of France, but actually turned against France the opinion of those who had demanded such surrender. No more deadly paradox can be imagined. It is bad enough to make concessions, but it is intolerable

that the concessions purchase only the bad opinion of the nations. It was disconcerting to find that when France renounced the employment of military measures she managed to bring upon herself louder accusations of militarism.

The diplomatic defeats of France in the years which followed the war should always be remembered in any estimate of the policy of M. Poincaré. Mr. Lloyd George had in a series of conferences obtained sacrifice after sacrifice from French Ministers. These sacrifices were made reluctantly. There were frequent attempts to react against the perpetual demands that the British Prime Minister made, which always resulted to the profit of Germany, but as the opinion of the world had been mobilised against France, she was compelled to yield.

Now, France had counted upon real reparations from Germany. She had counted upon the real support of England in obtaining such reparations. Was it not England who had swelled the total of the Allies' claims by including pensions? How was it possible then that the influence of England should immediately after the war be directed towards the reduction of the sacred debt? At first this influence was exercised surreptitiously, but gradually it was exercised more and more openly, and France was denounced as the country which prevented the return of peace and of prosperity to Europe. However unreasonable one may consider the demands that were made upon Germany to be, it must be admitted that it was hardly for England to turn ferociously upon France as she now does for asking that which had been promised. M. Poincaré and other Frenchmen saw with a feeling of dismay the facile successes of Mr. Lloyd George; successes which have not benefited England, since they have lost her the reputation of straight dealing and have

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destroyed her prestige on the Continent. More than one prominent official of the British Government at Spa, San Remo, and other places in which this jazz diplomacy was practised, threw up their hands and privately deplored the somewhat sharp practices which were employed. Because France, with her sense of logic, could not readjust her mind as quickly as the British mind was readjusted to the realities of reparation finance, she was denounced on all hands as reactionary. The more she gave up, the more she lost the friendship of practically every country in Europe. She lost, too, the friendship of America.

In 1919 she had friends even among her enemies. To-day she has enemies even among her friends. With England the breach was open. Italy was roused to fury. The United States turned bitterly against France. The Little Entente was suspicious. Hungary was disappointed. Austria was helplessly reproachful. Even Poland was plainly changing. Good relations with Russia seemed to be hopelessly compromised, whether Whites or Reds ruled. Germany had worked up a white hatred of France. Belgium was angry because at Cannes her priority was being denied.

It would have been hard to find a single people which regarded France with the respect and even affection of three years before. Doubtless this indisputable and lamentable state of affairs was largely due to French blunders. A little more suppleness, a better appreciation of the fact that the sun and the moon do not stand still and that the world turns perpetually, would doubtless have been good for France. Whatever one may say, however, with regard to British or to French diplomacy, it is certainly not surprising that the French Parliament became alarmed when it suspected that once more

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France was being *roulé*—to use the expression which was common in France—at the Cannes Conference, that M. Briand was recalled, was overthrown, and that a new Prime Minister who would say “No” to England was sought.

M. Poincaré was the inevitable choice. His prestige, his prodigious industry, his remarkable ability, his uncompromising sincerity, his fervent patriotism, his denunciation of these useless sacrifices, commended him to the French Parliament. France was obliged to do one of two things in the crisis which had arisen. She could have thrown over all notion of reparations for several years—which means for ever—and have submitted with a good grace to British policy, or she could, as she did, have taken a firm stand against England. It was obviously impossible to continue to oppose England only to be beaten by England. As France was not prepared without more ado to dismiss the possibility of obtaining substantial reparations, since her Budget was unbalanced and she had incurred enormous liabilities for the restoration of the ruined North—liabilities amounting, it was estimated, to a hundred milliard francs—the alternative was to call M. Poincaré, who in his innumerable articles had pleaded for a less passive policy, to take over the reins of government.

One may disguise it as one will, but it remains a fact that the ministry of M. Poincaré was a ministry of resistance to England. It was indeed time. While I personally disapprove of his policy, which will be found unworkable, it must be recognised that he was the true representative of the French Parliament and of the French nation. He stood, as few men have stood, for the instincts and sentiments of a people. There is a tendency in British journals to suppose that he reached his position by some accident,

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and that the French nation as a whole would have behaved and wanted to behave very differently. This is totally untrue. It would be hard to find a more genuine exponent of French views than M. Poincaré. All parties, with the exception of the Socialists, gave him their support. They disliked him personally in many cases, and he was far from being popular. That only emphasises the conformity of his views with the views of the nation. A sensation of malaise had come upon France. It was realised that France was playing a secondary rôle, was altogether subordinate to England. She had been pushed too far and had to assert her independence. She was bound to return to the Treaty. She was bound to reassert the principles of 1919, or else to let everything go and accept, not only the virtual obliteration of her credits on Germany but her own obliteration as a first-class Power. The result of surrender at that moment would have been the permanent enfeeblement of France, and there would have inevitably followed the revenge of Germany.

Much more important than the mere question of money, much more important than the material interests of France, was this sentimental urge for the restoration of her prestige. M. Poincaré was precisely the right man at the right moment. He was *dans l'axe*. He was sure of the quasi-unanimous support of the Deputies. He was trusted as an honest, down-right man. There was no duplicity about him. If his economic views were somewhat *simpliste*—as were the economic views of the whole world a few years ago—there were, at any rate, the views of France, who could not see why she should be cheated, even by the iron laws of economics, of what had been proclaimed to be due to her. Everybody felt that M. Poincaré would stand up to England and defy even economic laws. There was confidence in him.



His predecessor, M. Briand, was always distrusted. M. Briand was an opportunist, and opportunists are always regarded with suspicion. Sometimes he outbid the Right, and the Right looked upon him askance. Sometimes he turned to the Left, and if the Right became hostile the Left also was uneasy. It was only by perpetual equivocation that the miracle of his remaining in office for a year became possible. It was only by rendering the policy of France confused and ambiguous that he was allowed to stay. M. Briand contrived to obtain the sympathy of liberal-minded men while producing everywhere the impression that his country was anything but liberal and raising doubts about his own liberal views. It is surely always better to fulfil one's rôle whatever that rôle may be; and the efforts of M. Briand, belonging to the minority, to carry out the bidding of the majority, could only succeed in producing greater difficulties.

The year before I had participated in conversations in a certain cosmopolitan circle of diplomatists about the advent of M. Briand. The question that was posed was whether it would be better from the British point of view for M. Briand or M. Poincaré to become Président du Conseil. Most of the people in this little group believed that the coming of M. Poincaré would be fatal to European reconstruction. Most of them welcomed unreservedly M. Briand, because he was considered to be more moderate, more accommodating, but for myself I was bound to agree with those who argued that whether we liked M. Poincaré or not, he was clearly, as the doctors say, "indicated." He was the man of the *Bloc National*. In the circumstances in which France found herself, at the stage of political evolution which she had reached, M. Briand could hardly hope to do much against the tide. He would waste a year, and at the

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end there would be a wave of reaction. Nothing would have been achieved in the conversion of France to British views, and some time later the struggle would have to begin over again in worse conditions. M. Poincaré could not be kept permanently out of action. M. Briand, who might have come in later when the current was flowing with him, should have reserved for himself an opportunity of real usefulness.

I consider that, from the British point of view, nothing more disastrous was ever done than the coming of M. Briand at a moment when he could accomplish nothing. That wasted year has been exceedingly bad for Europe. There were those who foresaw that, had M. Poincaré then been put into power, it would have been shown in six months that his policy was not a possible policy. Then would have been the turn of M. Briand. But to put in M. Briand then meant that Radicalism would quickly be discredited in France, that Germany would develop the habit of not paying, that she would be encouraged in her opposition, and that presently M. Poincaré would start with the whole nation behind him. I think that, on the whole, this calculation has turned out to be precisely right. Nothing is more tragic than the mistiming of political efforts. Nothing is more interesting than speculations on what might have been had there been an interchange of personality. M. Briand in the later stages of his premiership was trying to make water flow uphill. Sooner or later he was certain to be repudiated. Sooner or later the Poincaré experiment, which had been loudly advertised, would have to be tried. It is true that M. Poincaré could not start quite from the same point from which he would have started a year earlier. But this only makes matters worse.

The Class '19 of French soldiers had been called up in May 1921 by M. Briand to occupy the Ruhr.

It did not occupy the Ruhr, and the fiasco was discouraging. It made it more difficult for such a proposal again to be made. It was, indeed, ruled out for the time being. But the consequence was that M. Poincaré had to spend another year in whipping up the French to this experiment.

Thus we may say that Europe lost two years before in fact the Ruhr was occupied, and its results for good or for evil demonstrated. In the meantime Germany had prepared the evasion of her capital; the bottom had fallen out of the mark; and the rebuilding of Europe had been made infinitely harder. Mr. Lloyd George has confessed that when he himself threatened to occupy the Ruhr, he was bluffing. But this was dangerous bluff; a sad Nemesis always follows such double dealing. No good has been accomplished by the mere postponement of the fatal day.

But in point of fact, had M. Poincaré really made up his mind to extend the military occupation? He had not. He had hoped that the mere threat, if supported by England, would be effective and that Germany would yield. From the beginning it was seen that this was one of those threats which lose their virtue when put into practice. The menace, it was hoped, would make its execution unnecessary. There was a fear that the move would be opposed in the country; that it would secure nothing for France, and that it would bring down on France the condemnation of the whole world. For a long time France shrank from such a course, but eventually she was manoeuvred into such a position that she had to choose between performance and utter discredit. M. Poincaré, too, was extremely nervous, and nothing forced his hand so much as the hostility which developed against him in England. He was obliged to choose between a dangerous advance and an ignominious retreat.

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Perhaps I may be allowed here to express the emphatic opinion that the statesman should never become a journalist. It is all very well to state one's opinions and one's ideals when one is irresponsible; and the publicist has an immense and useful part to play. The pressure that he may exercise upon events and upon persons in authority is extremely important. But it is impossible to be the statesman and the journalist rolled into one. The discrepancy between irresponsible writing and responsible acts is certain to be considerable. In England until recently there has happily been a clear distinction between the publicist and the politician, and it is unfortunate that this distinction is now being broken down, and that politicians such as Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Birkenhead are making use of the Press instead of the platform. Were Mr. J. A. Spender, or Mr. Garvin, or Mr. St. Loe Strachey—or in another category of writers, Mr. Wells and Mr. Shaw—suddenly to turn Ministers, English public life would suffer. They play no smaller part than the Ministers, but it is not the same part, and it cannot be the same part. It has always seemed to me to be an unfortunate thing that French statesmen are nearly all journalists, and nearly all the best French journalists are or will be Ministers.

In actual office it is not always possible to do all that one has promised. Problems cannot be approached from the same angle. They should not be. The politician should not deliberately load himself with an unnecessary burden. Either he is unable to live up to his articles and is embarrassed in attempting to conceal the discrepancy between his articles and his acts, or he is tempted and obliged, as was M. Poincaré, who had spread himself in the reviews and journals, to live up to the written word, no matter what the consequences may be.



The statesman cannot operate, or should not operate, without taking into account the wishes of foreign statesmen. He has to pay close attention to what is practical and what is unpractical. He has to subordinate logic and counsels of perfection to the need of adjusting his views to those of his colleagues of other countries. That is why it is a pity that in England the distinction is breaking down, and no better example of the danger could be given than the case of M. Poincaré, who found himself influenced rather by his own writings in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* than by the wishes of the two worlds.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAN

MOST Paris waiters look like great men : the great man seldom does. The personal appearance of M. Poincaré is certainly not prepossessing. There is no air of authority ; there is no emanation of a striking personality. Outwardly he seems insignificant. He is the type of the hardworking, plodding official who goes every morning at a fixed hour to his bureau, conscientiously performs his task, and returns to his little flat in the evening. M. Poincaré is on the short side ; indeed, he looks small. Even the officials at the Quai d'Orsay spoke of him as " the little man." Always is he dressed inconspicuously, with the neatness of a self-respecting official. His hands are somewhat flaccid, and during his long career he has learned how to shake hands with the least possible exertion. Before you can seize his hand, he has, with a dexterous movement which comes of long practice, turned over your hand and has escaped.

He is rather pale in complexion, and his face in repose always wears a melancholy expression. His pallor is, in fact, sickly, and yet M. Poincaré is a man of remarkable energy. Behind the white mask there burns a fire which now and again in the course of conversation flashes through his eyes. His sparse, straggling beard, and his little white moustache falling over a narrow lip, add to the impression of a Chinese mask. One notices, however, that his



forehead is square-cut, is broad but not high. His enemies give to their caricaturists the fairly easy task of exaggerating his features to resemble those of a beast of prey, and another favourite device of the cartoonist is to blot out all life from his head and make it resemble a skull. Certainly the likeness is not lost in these unflattering representations, but, nevertheless, the chief impression which has always been made upon me by his personality is that of timidity. M. de Freycinet was described as "the little white mouse." The description would apply not inadequately to M. Poincaré. When he talks, his eyes are downcast or are wandering uneasily about the room. Sometimes he becomes animated with a sort of nervous exaltation, and he then speaks with exceptional rapidity and precision in a high-pitched, metallic voice.

It was the practice of M. Poincaré during a long period to receive the foreign correspondents in Paris in the gilded, tapestry-hung room in the Quai d'Orsay. These interviews were found by the majority of my colleagues notable in that they conveyed practically nothing to them. For ten minutes the Prime Minister would appear to take them into his confidence, but on analysis it would be found that everything he said was so wrapped round with reservations that, in spite of the apparent exactitude of his phrases, nothing remained. When questioned, he was evasive. M. Poincaré became more of a mystery when he addressed them privately than when he and his policy were regarded at a distance.

His method of dismissing the company was final. He rose suddenly from his desk and walked to the door. There was nothing else to say, no possible means of probing the mind of the man. His treatment of the French journalists, who, however, have always given him what is called a "good Press,"

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was even more cursory. They would often wait outside his door hoping to catch him as he emerged. He would utter three or four sentences and pass on his way. Sometimes, indeed, he would consent to receive a deputation of the French Press ; that is to say, the representatives of the leading French newspapers, which are known as the Big Five—namely, the *Petit Parisien*, the *Matin*, the *Echo de Paris*, the *Journal* and the *Petit Journal*. It was for the rest of the correspondents to obtain their information at second-hand from their more fortunate colleagues.

Naturally, from time to time he would collaborate a little more closely with the writers of the French Press, notably the representative of the semi-official *Temps*. But it is fair to say that in spite of M. Poincaré's necessary reliance on the Press he is undoubtedly secretive. A writer for the newspapers himself, he is nevertheless by inclination averse to publicity.

It will be remembered that nobody protested more vigorously than M. Poincaré against the hectic methods of the Supreme Council, which went from casino to casino and from capital to capital in Europe. These conferences, with their accompaniment of reporters from every country in the world, were really shocking to him. His temperament is altogether against the diplomacy of the cinema and of the market-place. Much has been written about the respective merits of public diplomacy and secret diplomacy, and after the war there was advocated a particularly noxious species of open diplomacy. It was haphazard, sporadic, feverish, and in the true sense of the word frivolous. Diplomacy is a delicate plant, and if it is constantly to be pulled up by the roots to show the world how it is progressing, very little that is of any importance can be accom-

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plished. Europe cannot be restored by a series of spectacles and the clamour of drums and cymbals.

M. Poincaré revolted against the system of reluctant concessions, sudden decisions, undigested policies. He reverted to the quieter, more circumspect, steadier methods which appealed to him. These methods, too, have their disadvantages, and they tended to give us mere negative policies. M. Poincaré became the great obstructionist. Everything was delayed until each point had been elucidated. Obviously, what is needed is something between the jumpiness and the unreality of the Supreme Council and the evasiveness and procrastination of the old diplomacy, which conducts conversations by telegram and argues with Notes.

M. Poincaré's temperament induces him to work silently and in solitude. There is a sense in which he has no collaborators. M. Perretti della Rocca, the able director of political affairs at the Quai d'Orsay, has certainly been of the greatest possible assistance, and, indeed, the whole personnel of the Quai d'Orsay has worked swiftly and thoroughly. M. Poincaré expects any technical assistance to be given without delay. He is as exacting for others as he is for himself. But although they present the results of their technical work to him, it is M. Poincaré himself who studies the documentation, considers the elements of judgment which are presented to him, and pronounces, without the help and without the knowledge, until after the event, of anybody.

His capacity for work is astounding. It would seem that he lives for nothing but work. At eight o'clock every morning he is at the Quai d'Orsay. His day is carefully arranged. Even his chauffeur receives each morning, written in M. Poincaré's own hand, precise instructions which cover the

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entire day. Moreover, he keeps to his time-table with remarkable regularity. He is tireless and punctual; not a moment is lost. It is often between eight and nine o'clock in the evening when he leaves the Quai d'Orsay to dine at home. He now consents occasionally to preside over banquets, but at first he refused to do so, on the ground that a Prime Minister could not afford to waste two hours in the evening, and also on the ground that even the appearance of participating in any kind of pleasure—if anybody believes that a public banquet is a pleasure—is undignified and even offensive after the tremendous tragedy of the war. The Puritan strain that is in him was thus shown.

M. Poincaré still indulges very little in social life, and passes his evenings at home in the quietude of his study. Lately he has relaxed to the extent of passing some of his week-ends in his little house in the devastated region of Sampigny in the Department of the Meuse. This house has been rebuilt since the war. His old homestead was deliberately shelled by the Germans, as was the entire village which had the distinction of sheltering the man who was then the President of the French Republic. But whether M. Poincaré is in his modest residence of the Rue Marbeau or at Sampigny, he is always at work. There was installed a special telephonic line between Paris and Sampigny; and on his week-end vacations he remained in close touch with the Quai d'Orsay, and often wrote the notes for the speeches in which he excels in his country retreat.

An illustration of his dislike to wasting time may be found in his reluctance to travel from Paris to Sampigny by motor-car. It is impossible to think or to work in a motor-car; the railway serves him better.

Nobody has better fulfilled the American ideal of efficiency. His ruling passion is order. There



are no scattered papers on his desk. There are no scattered moments in his life. His mind is as well ordered as the most carefully kept pigeon-holes. It is perhaps a single-track mind, as was said of the mind of President Wilson, and he runs through to the end of his thought with irresistible logic. When a problem is presented to him, his mental machinery immediately composes a logical brief based on the statutes. When that brief has been composed, it stands. His memory is prodigious. His mind, as Mr. Wilbur Forrest once wrote, is an inanimate store of data. From it he can take at any moment the materials which he requires. His grasp of a myriad subjects, all neatly catalogued, is extraordinary. One has seen this in the debates in the Chamber of Deputies many times. Although M. Poincaré carefully writes the text of his speeches, he is by no means bound to his text. An unexpected interpellation finds him ready at any moment to talk authoritatively with copious citations of documents for whatever length of time may be necessary to dispose of his interrupter.

There is much truth in the observation of an anonymous Frenchman who has written about M. Poincaré, that the coldness, the dryness, which usually mark his utterances, come from the constant effort that he makes to remain master of his thought. This entry into oneself, this difficulty of exteriorisation, is, he says, known to those who attempt to dominate the facts by their intelligence. There is a perpetual tension of spirit which results in a continual lucidity. But what is produced is rather light than heat. M. Poincaré reasons, he is subtle and full of fineness, he has intellectual courage, but he lacks a certain audacity and imaginative spread of wings. He is scrupulous to excess.

He is, of course, accused of stubbornness, but as

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he himself would say, there are not two kinds of right. If he believes himself to be right with unshakable conviction, how can he depart from his ideas even though the whole world clamours against him. Perhaps this is a defect. The philosophical mind sees that there are indeed various aspects of truth. It sees the other side of the shield. It looks all round problems. It realises that the real tragedy of the world is that the battle is not between right and wrong, but between right and right. Unfortunately, this kind of philosophical mind is often sterile. Why should one choose one side rather than the other if one sees that both have so much to commend them? Mr. Balfour (as he then was) became to the British the supreme exponent of philosophic doubt, and his indecision was notorious. Scepticism pushed to extremes must result in inaction, or, at any rate, in action that is casual and unconvincing. M. Poincaré, at any rate, escapes this danger. Intellectually he is sure of his case. He will not admit the smallest question of his judgment. It does not necessarily follow that intellectual stubbornness is always backed up by stubbornness in any practical course, because character here intervenes, and the critics of M. Poincaré protest that logical as he is in words, he is not always, through some weakness of character, logical in deeds. Be that as it may, it should be emphatically stated that whatever stubbornness may be reproached against M. Poincaré is not the stubbornness of ignorance or of indolence, but the stubbornness of intellect and of careful calculation.

There can be no doubt that M. Poincaré, as will be seen when we retrace his life, has arrived at his supreme position by sheer force of work. The author of *Ceux qui nous mènent*, in a short but skilful portrait of M. Poincaré, remarks that when he



became for the first time Minister in 1893 in the Cabinet of Charles Dupuy, everybody agreed that the young deputy had a fine future, but nobody thought that he would ever become the national statesman *par excellence*. If he has created for himself the most astonishing career of the Third Republic, greater than that of Gambetta, it is because of his unrelenting labour, his single-minded devotion to his task. "If the position of M. Poincaré can be compared to that of anyone else, it is," he adds, "to that of Thiers. It is said, however, that M. Poincaré does not like Thiers, and has somewhere in his cartons a biography of the maker of the Third Republic which is of an extreme severity. Thiers was contradictory, was petulant, was boastful : three things which are particularly antipathetic to M. Poincaré. Moreover, M. Poincaré would reproach Thiers with having accepted defeat, with having shown humility. He is not, therefore, of the school of Thiers. Indeed, he is in many respects the opposite of Thiers. Nevertheless, nobody has ever appealed to the French middle classes as these two men who are so dissimilar."

One is tempted, too, to remark, as has been remarked by French portraitists, that M. Poincaré is an entirely new type of the national statesman. There is not the smallest suspicion of *panache*. M. Clemenceau, who had his great moments of popularity, wore his *panache* conspicuously. He was picturesque as perhaps only the French can be picturesque. M. Poincaré is anything but that. He is plain, simple, unaffected, caring nothing for effects. There is nothing of the traditional Frenchman, gesticulating, bragging, using fine florid phrases, about M. Poincaré. He is the lawyer of affairs.

In his private life he is almost an ascetic. He imposes upon himself the strictest discipline. He does not smoke. He drinks wine sparingly. He has no

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recreations. At the table he is Spartan. Often have I spent hours in the company of French politicians and have talked of little but food and the culinary art. It would be impossible to imagine such a conversation with M. Poincaré.

In money matters he is equally rigorous. He practises at the Quai d'Orsay an unaccustomed economy. He does not draw upon the funds which cover anything from State entertainment to Secret Service. During the period of his Presidency, it is recorded, he sent to the Assistance Publique, that is to say, the poor-law authorities, to be distributed among the poor the numerous presents which poured in upon him, believing that he was not legally entitled to them.

It should perhaps be added that his capacity for memorising and for precision is a characteristic of the family. Henri Poincaré was perhaps the greatest mathematician that France has ever had. Thanks to this gift, he actually wrote in a single day his memorable thirteen-thousand-word answer to the long British Note of August 1923 which had been prepared in London during several weeks. He answered Lord Curzon point by point on technical diplomatic matters practically without reference to notes of any kind. This is perhaps one of the most remarkable feats of his career. Well may the French sing in their café concerts, "Il a les poings, poings, poings ; Il a les poings—carrés !"

It would, however, be an error to suppose that he is insensible. Although he strives to suppress his emotions, one has seen him at rare intervals the prey of an emotion that he could not, for all his intellectuality and will power, disguise. Beneath the cold exterior there is a heart which is readily touched by the things he loves. That he loves his country with almost unexampled, though controlled, ardour there can be no doubt.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE LORRAINER

MONSIEUR RAYMOND POINCARÉ is a Lorrainer. That explains much. M. Maurice Barrés devoted a great part of his literary life to explaining the historical and natural reasons for the exceptional sentiments of patriotism of the Eastern Frenchman. In the two provinces which were the special victims of German aggression, a peculiar hatred of Germany and a peculiar love of France—*la culte de la patrie*—sprang up. In those who remembered the invasion of 1870, the resolution to restore the territories which Germany had taken became a religion. Indeed, something more than a mere restoration was in the minds of the men of the East. They felt some affinity even with the Germans who lived on the French side of the Rhine. The policy of the Rhine, that is to say, the transference of the frontiers of France to the Rhine, is ancient. But the feeling that the Rhinelanders may become good Frenchmen, that they are particularly susceptible to French culture, is new. At any rate, the key to much in the later development of M. Poincaré is to be found in the fact that he was born ten years before the Franco-Prussian War—in 1860, at Bar-le-Duc in Lorraine.

In the Chamber of Deputies I have heard him speak with real passion of his reminiscences of the Franco-Prussian War. It burnt into his brain. A schoolboy of an impressionable age, the events of

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that tragic year were ever present to his memory. All France thought from time to time of the ravished regions. All France did resolve that some day Germany should be made to yield up the territories she had stolen. The expression of Gambetta, "N'en parlez jamais, pensez-y toujours," stuck. But if the remembrance of those days grew fainter for many Frenchmen, they grew clearer for men who, like M. Poincaré, were sufficiently old to have seen the war and who were natives of Lorraine.

He comes from the middle classes. His father was a civil engineer. His education was begun at a preparatory school and was continued at the Lycée of Bar-le-Duc. It is recorded that he obtained a high place always in the school. The first prize for French composition went to him, and he was equally proficient in Latin, in Greek, and in natural history. It was six years after the war that he was sent to Paris to the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, and there he began to show considerable literary taste. There remain certain portraits of his comrades which are excellent. La Bruyère was apparently his model. He passed his *baccalauréat* without any difficulty, and had then to decide between a professorship and the Bar. It was his mother who persuaded him to begin legal studies.

There is in the Latin Quarter a little insignificant boarding-house in which many students, who were afterwards to become numbered among the most distinguished men of France, were, by some strange coincidence, always to be found. When M. Poincaré was lodged here, his fellow-boarders were Henri Poincaré, his cousin, Alexandre Millerand, now President of the French Republic, Gabriel Hanotaux, and several students who are now Senators. According to M. Hanotaux, Poincaré was then known by the nickname of "Prudence Lorraine."



This is curious, for these two words do explain M. Poincaré. They are words which are in some respects contradictory. Lorraine is the element which enabled him when the trial of 1914 came upon France to wage the war with the pent-up energy of one who remembered and who thought of the crime of 1870 always. It is the element which has taken him into the Ruhr. But Prudence represents his careful methods of procedure, his step-by-step mind, his circumspection and his desire to cover every action with clear legal authority.

A few years later the father of M. Poincaré, having been appointed Inspecteur Général des Ponts et Chaussées, was enabled to come to Paris. In 1879 M. Poincaré once more went to the east for his period of military service. He served in the 26th line regiment at Nancy. It was in the *Echo de l'Est* that he began to be a journalist. When he returned to Paris he contributed to a number of reviews, notably the *Voltaire* and the *XIX Siècle* under Edmond About. His inclination was to devote himself entirely to writing, but he was dissuaded by André Theuriet. He therefore attended the Law Courts and continued to work for his Doctor's Degree. This he obtained in 1883. His rise in his profession was swift. In a few years he had become a leading advocate. It was at the Bar that he made the fairly large fortune which he possesses. It was at the Bar that he won his independence. Abroad, and even at home, M. Poincaré is chiefly thought of as a politician. But he has never been a professional politician in the sense which is so common in France. He became as it were a politician in his spare time, and still earns when out of office all that he needs by his pen. His situation in the Chamber never enabled him to make money. That is the temptation which assails many Frenchmen. But

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in the case of M. Poincaré he resolved early in his career that politics were not a professional calling. Sometimes it is reproached against him that in the days when he was active at the Bar he was the advocate of great industrial concerns, and that he remains under an obligation to them. The suggestion is that his policy has been influenced by personal interests. This is a calumny which is unworthy of any opponent of M. Poincaré in England or in France. That he has striven for what he conceives to be the material interests of France and that he may have confused France with the Comité des Forges is of course another matter. He has himself denied in measured terms that he has been engaged by the Comité des Forges. That he served his clients well when he was at the Bar, and that these clients included some of the greatest industrial and commercial companies in France, is a fact. It is also a fact that the Comité des Forges possesses great political power in France. But of all the politicians with whom I am acquainted in France, M. Poincaré is undoubtedly the most honest. It is difficult to imagine how anyone can bring into question his absolute rectitude. His first care was to put himself beyond the reach of all temptation and to place his political activities above suspicion. His success as an advocate was unbounded, and although perhaps the large fortunes that are sometimes earned in England at the Bar can scarcely be earned in France, M. Poincaré founded his subsequent career on the sound basis of financial independence. He still retains his connection with the Bar, and attends the Palais de Justice every week.

In 1911 he was elected by the Council of the Bar, and it is well known that he still aspires to the supreme post of *bâtonnier*. Not until six years after he obtained his Licence en Droit did



M. Poincaré begin his public life. In 1886 he was the private secretary of M. Jules Develle, then Minister of Agriculture. A year later he became Conseiller Général for Pierrefitte. In 1889 he was elected to the Chamber for Commercy. Even then, however, he could hardly be said to be a full-fledged politician. For three years he passed through a silent apprenticeship. The Boulangist controversy was raging, and he took little part in it.

It may surprise some people to learn that M. Poincaré specialised in finance. It was as a financier that he first attracted the attention of Parliament, and it was his reputation as a financier that took him eventually to the post of Chief Magistrate of the Republic. Finance has been throughout the existence of the Third Republic perhaps the principal question in France. The Budget has never been placed on a really sound footing. To-day the expedient of a special Budget, which is called the Budget of Recoverable Expenses, in which the expenditure is only balanced by imaginary credits on Germany, has helped to place France in an unsatisfactory financial position. But this is not new. Although budgetary unity has been constantly advocated, the system of supplementary estimates and of extraordinary expenditure has always prevailed. Even before the Third Republic it was the practice to balance budgets by the simple device of calling deficits extraordinary expenditure. It is not merely the fault of the Republican régime. During the Monarchy and during the Second Empire the same dangerous course was followed. Budgetary unity has always been somewhat theoretical. Without dwelling further upon this point it should be noted that the first speech of M. Poincaré in the Chamber was in defence of the Budget of Maurice Rouvier. He was a member of the

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Budget Commission. In 1890 he drafted the estimates for the Ministry of Finance. Those who heard him were struck with the skill with which he handled his subject. He pointed out the difficulties that were involved in unification, but he also pointed out the peril of allowing extraordinary items to become permanent items. This speech marks an important date in his life. He was immediately looked upon as a great parliamentarian.

His second notable intervention was also upon the Budget. He again protested against the principle of supplementary estimates. He declared that there should be no public outlay without previous authorisation. In 1893 we find him Rapporteur Général of the Budget. There was trouble with the Senate, and a resolution was proposed asserting the rights of the Chamber in financial matters. M. Poincaré, who declined to take sides in this unfortunate dispute between the two Houses, resigned. His resignation fortified his position, and when the conflict ended he was asked to resume his post.

The first offer of a portfolio to M. Poincaré was that of Finance Minister. It was offered to him by Méline after the fall of the Ribot Ministry. M. Poincaré refused. But in April 1893 M. Charles Dupuy asked him to become Minister of Education in his Cabinet. He was not yet thirty. He was the youngest Minister of the Republic. Nevertheless, he acquitted himself with great distinction. He pronounced the funeral oration on the death of Renan. He uttered many pleas for an increase of culture, and he had much to do with making secondary education more accessible than it had been to women.

Like M. Léon Bérard, in the last Poincaré Cabinet, he supported anything which made for the discipline

of classical education. Discipline, moderation and obedience are the three virtues on which he insisted again and again. He held his first portfolio only for eight months, but he was undoubtedly an able Minister of Education, and the young politician was assured of a great future.

Ministries come and go with surprising rapidity in France, and the Casimir Périer Ministry which succeeded only lasted until the middle of 1894. Charles Dupuy returned to power, and M. Poincaré returned to his first love—he became Finance Minister. The President of the Republic, Carnot, was assassinated in this year, and was succeeded by Casimir Périer. The Dupuy Cabinet continued in office. Then came a series of debates on the proposal to impose an income tax.

France has preferred the system of indirect taxation. An extremely large proportion of the national income is derived from taxes on articles of consumption. It is not true that the French do not tax themselves considerably; but even after the income tax was, through the efforts of M. Joseph Caillaux, instituted, its application was opposed, and it has never furnished the sums to the State that it is capable of furnishing. I have myself heard a Finance Minister apologise before a meeting of business men for the disagreeable necessity of collecting the income tax and acknowledge that anything savouring of inquisition was to be deplored.

The French are incorrigibly hostile to the income tax. It has taken England many decades to secure the smooth working of this tax, which is altogether opposed to deep-seated conceptions of liberty which are held in France. The French believe that their income is their private affair. They do not mind paying heavily upon all their purchases, but they strongly object to the obligation of disclosing to

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anybody, neighbour, relative or State official, their exact means. It is probably true that the majority of wives do not know what their husbands earn. Certainly the majority of children have the haziest notion of the fortune of their father. Whatever one may think of this state of affairs, one has to take the French as they are, and there is no more cherished sentiment in France than that of the right to conceal their precise financial position.

In England one can usually estimate fairly accurately the resources of a man by the sort of life he leads, the kind of house in which he lives, the society in which he moves, and the tastes which he indulges. But in France one would be wrong nine times out of ten in any such estimate. The Frenchman behaves as he thinks proper, almost without regard to his means—that is to say, that while he does not exceed his means, he may or may not spend a quarter, a half, three-quarters of his income. He dwells in whatever habitation suits him. He keeps whatever company he pleases. He is not troubled by the British fetish of maintaining appearances. The declaration of his income is, therefore, repugnant to him.

M. Poincaré, while not opposed to the income tax as such, favoured the taxation of income at its sources. He did not favour the declaration of total income. No Minister who hopes to remain in office could advocate strict official inquiry into the individual property of Frenchmen. It has also been well pointed out that book-keeping in France is not so efficient as in some other countries. In many cases businesses belong to the family, and the head of the family is secretive. Even limited liability companies have their balance sheets checked by auditors selected from among the shareholders. In a work by an anonymous author which was



published before the war, this subject is dealt with at length, and among the objections to the income tax in France which are enumerated is that the Frenchman is by no means assured that information obtained by tax collectors would not be improperly divulged and used to serve political ends or to satisfy private curiosity.

There is unquestionably a bitterness in politics which is unknown in England. There is a prevalence of intrigue which makes the danger real. Another objection to which the author calls attention is the fear that the strict enforcement of the income tax would mean an additional burden for the taxpayer, who is already heavily hit by indirect taxation. The income tax, in short, is not in substitution of other taxes but in addition to them. There would perhaps be less opposition were there reforms in other directions and compensations adequately made. Further, some unfair advantage would be given to the holder of rentes. State loans in general are not taxed. It would now be impossible, in view of existing engagements, to tax the rentier, and yet it is unfair to those who derive their income from other sources to exempt the State bondholder.

Much could be written on this subject, but it will be seen from these summary remarks that the French attitude is not as unreasonable as is sometimes supposed. Although the income tax is now an accepted fact, it remains capable of considerable development.

The part that M. Poincaré played in these controversies was highly important. In 1895 Félix Faure became the successor of Casimir Périer, who resigned. The Dupuy Ministry was succeeded by the Ribot Ministry, in which M. Poincaré was asked to return to the post of Minister of Education. In this office he had to deal with a question which



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is continually in dispute in France, that of the right of teachers to participate in electioneering. It has already been stated that political controversy is often exceedingly bitter in France. While the teacher as citizen should not be deprived of his rights, it is the general feeling that he should not conspicuously enter the fray. Is he not the guardian of the young, and should not his special authority and influence indicate to him the desirability of remaining neutral in political, in moral, and in religious matters?

M. Ribot fell in October, and was succeeded by M. Léon Bourgeois. M. Bourgeois in turn was succeeded by Méline. During the Bourgeois Ministry M. Poincaré dropped out of public life and confined his energies to the Bar. With the Méline Ministry, however, he again became conspicuous, though this time in opposition to the Cabinet, becoming leader of the Progressive Republicans.

It was at this time that the Dreyfus affair came into prominence. There were urgent calls for a revision of the *procès*. France divided itself into two camps. Although it is not our purpose to review the history of France during the period covered by the public life of M. Poincaré, it is necessary in any estimate of M. Poincaré's character to consider what part he took in this conflict. His part was that which we might have expected. His views, as explained by himself to the Chamber in 1898, were carefully balanced. They gave some offence to those who belonged to his own party, but not sufficient offence to compromise his position. They made of M. Poincaré not an adversary of the Dreyfusards but, at any rate, not a supporter. In this speech one finds expressed respect for the Army, respect for the military courts, respect for the judicial system, and deprecation of any inter-

ference with the regular course of justice. So much for general principles, but he admitted that exceptions might be made if fresh facts had come to light after a trial, and he considered that there had been sufficient developments since the conviction of Dreyfus to warrant an inquiry.

It will be seen that M. Poincaré's attitude was non-committal and exceedingly cautious. Nevertheless, he helped to bring about the split in his party which was followed by the formation of the group which calls itself the Republicans of the Left, to which M. Poincaré adhered.

When President Faure died mysteriously and tragically and M. Loubet was elected President, the Dupuy Cabinet, which was again in power, quickly came to an end, and for the first time M. Poincaré approached the highest goal of the politician. He was asked to form a new Government. The crisis, however, was formidable, and he was obliged to confess that he was unable to complete his Cabinet. The famous Waldeck-Rousseau Government then came into power. It was one of the strongest and best that the Third Republic has seen, and it continued unchanged for a longer time than any of its predecessors. It disposed of the Dreyfus affair, and it appeased the passions which threatened the very existence of the Republic.

With the coming of the Combes Cabinet, with which M. Poincaré naturally had little sympathy, France was plunged into the religious war, which lasted for many years, and of which one hears the echoes to-day. It was at this time that M. Poincaré first became a member of the Senate, where he associated himself with the Alliance Démocratique Républicaine, which put itself in opposition to the Extreme Nationalists and to the anti-Semites.

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He stood for the Republic, which was being attacked on the one hand by reactionary Clericalism and, on the other hand, by revolutionary Socialism. He moderately supported the Separation of Church and State, in accordance with the measure which was then being advocated by M. Briand.

In 1905 he was offered a seat in the Rouvier Cabinet, but declined, and a year later entered the Sarrien Ministry as Finance Minister. M. Clemenceau succeeded M. Sarrien, and gave way in his turn to M. Briand. Then, after the short-lived Monis Ministry, came that of M. Caillaux and the events in which M. Poincaré was involved, which already heralded the Great War of 1914.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PATRIOT

THE Agadir incident was the first solemn warning to Europe of the colossal struggle which was to sweep away the old world as we knew it. We are still engaged, in spite of miseries and misunderstandings, in rebuilding our world upon the ruins. Whether M. Caillaux was right or wrong is a question which could be discussed with passion, but upon which no definite judgment could yet be passed without exposing oneself to the charge of prejudice. All one can say is that he acted for the best, and certainly does not deserve the accusations of treason which are levelled against him. Doubtless his policy was ambiguous, but he wished to avert the war, which was then threatened. War was averted, but only for the moment. Europe was given, from 1911 to 1914, three years' respite. Whether that respite was good or bad will be the subject of controversy for generations. Whether M. Caillaux, in surrendering a strip of French possessions in Africa to placate Germany, did not really encourage her, is a thesis that may, at any rate, be argued. Throughout France there was dismay when, in order to obtain German acquiescence to French aims in Morocco, M. Caillaux ceded these tracts of land, and, as was freely said, humiliated France. It was M. Poincaré who drew up the report of the Parliamentary Committee on the settlement. He expressed himself in the most scathing terms of the negotiations

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conducted by M. Caillaux over the head of the Foreign Minister. Down came the Government in the dust, although M. Poincaré, in spite of his condemnation, recommended the ratification of the treaty as a matter of French honour. It was inevitable on M. Caillaux's downfall that M. Poincaré, who undoubtedly represented public sentiment, should be called upon to take his place. This was in itself an ominous step. It was, in effect, a repudiation of methods of conciliation with Germany ; it was, in effect, a challenge and a defiance to the arrogance of Germany. Moreover, the character of the Cabinet which M. Poincaré was able to form was a remarkable expression of national feeling. It included men of all parties ; it was the Ministry of all the talents. There was M. Léon Bourgeois, who had always striven for peace, and who had been all his life the foremost French exponent of the idea of the League of Nations. There was M. Briand, a man of the Left, who had occupied the post of Prime Minister. There was M. Delcassé, who was particularly disliked by Germany, a diplomatist of the highest ability, who had once been dropped by the French at the behest of Germany. There was M. Millerand, an extreme Radical, who has been sobered by the years and who is now President of the Republic. There was M. Barthou, the author of the law which on the eve of the war imposed three years' military service on all Frenchmen. There was M. Klotz, an eminent Finance Minister, of real skill, in spite of the *boutade* of M. Clemenceau, in whose war Cabinet he subsequently served—a *boutade* in which he declared that he had chosen M. Klotz as Finance Minister because he was the only Jew whom he knew who did not understand finance !

With such a Government, which might well be called the *Ministère National*, M. Poincaré hoped to



restore the shattered prestige of his country. He announced the *union sacrée* of which we heard so much during the war. He announced a policy of appeasement at home and a policy of prestige abroad. France was already under the shadow of coming events. Everybody realised that the Army and the Navy should be brought to the highest point of efficiency. Everybody realised that the Entente with England should be strengthened and the Alliance with Russia consolidated.

It is necessary here to say something of French foreign policy. In 1904, when the Anglo-French agreement, which constituted the basis of the Entente Cordiale, was signed, the two countries had in view chiefly the settlement of various colonial quarrels. The Entente began as a little thing, but it was presently to become the most important factor in European life. Germany herself was partly to blame for this development. France and England were driven together when in 1905 Germany demanded the resignation of M. Delcassé. The aggressive designs of Germany could not be regarded as in doubt. There followed the Algeiras Conference, in which the long-drawn battle between France and Germany over Morocco clearly manifested itself. Our French friends who are inclined to cavil at British policy should always remember not only our help in the war, but our loyal help in the Algeiras negotiations. Had German policy been wise, it would have already seen the peril, but the mailed fist was used again and again, and every blow only served to weld the Entente.

The incident of Casablanca in 1908, and the incident of Agadir in 1911, reminded the whole world of the German danger. But Germany continued to insult and humiliate France; continued to force her to strengthen her army, to forget the Dreyfus polemic

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and the anti-Clerical polemics, and to seek friendships abroad which would enable her to resist the German Government.

There are many Frenchmen who believe that, had France resisted the Agadir coup, Germany would have realised that she was pushing things too far. The Agadir coup brought M. Poincaré to power with the whole country behind him. France was in no mood to submit to bullying. The moment had come to choose between an assertion of national dignity and the definite relegation of France to the position of a third-rate Power.

Undoubtedly England was right on every ground in cementing the Entente. The traditional ground on which British policy is built is that of the Balance of Power. With France eliminated as a first-class European country, the hegemony of Germany would have been unchallenged. England alone could have done nothing against the increasing aggressiveness of Germany, and England would eventually have been one of the greatest sufferers. Sometimes our instinctive distrust of any European Power which seeks unchecked ascendancy has led us to take sides against France. At the present moment many people in England feel that German pretension having been disposed of, Germany having been crushed and left comparatively helpless for a generation, we should turn against France, who is now in a position to dictate her will, not only to Germany, but to most of the smaller States which make up the Continent. But this eternal game of seesaw, so far from preventing another war, will make another war absolutely certain. Germany, encouraged and supported by England, will sooner or later revolt in arms against the Treaty of Versailles and will seek her revenge. Once more Germany will be on top. Are we then, when Germany has won, to range ourselves

on the side of France, who in her turn will endeavour to win the rubber? If so, the perspective is hopeless. There is no reason why the conflict should ever come to an end; and each successive generation would be doomed to see the recommencement of the perpetual strife between France and Germany with England, alternately on either side, always endeavouring to bring down the Power which is strongest.

Further, it should be remarked that the position is perhaps not so simple as that. France, discouraged by our example, is beginning to ask why she, too, should not strive for a Balance of Power, and if England is in opposition to her and the Entente is at an end, why she should not make a pact with Germany which would be directed against England. All this is deplorable. British policy, in so far as it rests upon the principle of the Balance of Power, can only perpetuate the confusion and the conflict of Europe. Is there no better way? If in individual life a *ménage à trois* is impossible, is it impossible in the case of three great nations, all of whom have much to gain in a common friendship and have everything to lose by the alternation of antagonisms?

It is possible that nothing could have been done to prevent the war. It is possible that the Entente Cordiale directed against Germany was the only course we could have pursued, having regard to the German mentality. But surely we have learnt our lesson, and Germany, too, has learnt her lesson. The theory that by dividing Europe into two groups fairly equal in strength both sides will be so afraid of testing their strength that the prospect of war will be removed, is entirely fallacious. The equilibrium cannot be preserved, and the moment it is upset peace is in peril. These, however, are ideas of to-day and of to-morrow.

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Historically, M. Poincaré was doubtless justified when he asserted that France was compelled to make herself secure, to increase her military forces, and to call to her aid in time of need Russia and England. There was a chance that Germany would not, in face of France's strength, attack. That chance turned out to be illusory, but it is certain that Germany would in any case have attacked an enfeebled France.

As Prime Minister M. Poincaré's political programme was then unmistakable. That it corresponded with the wishes of the nation, which had recovered from the defeat which had weighed upon it for so long, was evident by the enthusiasm with which M. Poincaré was hailed. There was a sigh of relief. It was realised that at last France refused to be tyrannised, that France was herself again. M. Poincaré himself became Foreign Minister.

There were many difficult questions to be solved. The Moroccan question, which was only disposed of this year, 1924, if, indeed, it is yet disposed of, continued to be particularly acute. There was trouble with Spain concerning the delimitation of the French and Spanish zones. The firmness and diplomatic skill of M. Poincaré were shown in these negotiations and the awkward moments were safely passed. The British Government is to be thanked for its assistance. At last the Franco-Spanish Treaty was concluded. But difficulties also arose with Italy, for the Latin sisters by no means live in good accord. Between France and Italy the difficulties have always been more imaginary than real. There is a susceptibility on both sides that magnifies the smallest incidents. Happily it was found possible to refer the Manouba-Carthage affair to the Hague Tribunal. M. Poincaré had no sooner overcome this obstacle to good relations than the Balkan States mobilised and issued their ultimatum to Turkey. The diplomatists



asked themselves once more if this was the match in the powder magazine which would blow up Europe. It was to the Near East that they had become accustomed to look for the beginning of the European war. It was, in fact, in the Near East, that is to say, in the Balkans, that the great conflagration began. But on this occasion diplomacy was able to circumscribe the conflict.

Sir Edward Grey (Lord Grey) showed that statesmanship which has made his admirers proclaim him to be the greatest Foreign Minister that England has had for a century, and M. Poincaré also displayed the nettle of his pasture. He issued the circular in which the Great Powers were asked to subscribe to a declaration of territorial disinterestedness. England and Russia agreed and Germany followed suit. It was harder to persuade Italy and Austria, who were more nearly concerned. But they, too, finally agreed. Sir Edward Grey later assembled the Ambassadors' Conference in London. The Great Powers seemed desirous at this time of preventing the tragic shock, and there was a ray of hope in the sky that the dreadful storm would, after all, be postponed indefinitely. Alas, it was postponed only for a short time !

Is it any wonder that when the date of the Presidential elections came in sight M. Poincaré, who had succeeded so well, who had placed France back to her rightful rank among the nations, who had shown that firmness does not necessarily mean war, should have been thought of as the successor of M. Fallières ? He had become a national figure, perhaps the most truly representative figure of the Third Republic. The Lorrainer embodied the aspirations of a people. He stood, not for imperialism, not for aggression, but for legitimate defence. He had changed that consciousness of defeat which had



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lain heavily on France for many years. He had incarnated the French virtues of logic, of determination, of clarity. The troubled history of the Third Republic, with its vicissitudes, was a thing of the past. France had emerged from the numerous trials and tribulations still strong and undaunted, with greater confidence in herself, with a greater conviction that she was the outpost of civilisation, the advance guard of culture. She was respected and admired. She was prepared for whatever fate might befall her. She held her head high. There are two periods in the history of the Third Republic: the pre-Poincaré period and the period which followed 1911; the period during which France was crushed, divided and afraid, and the period in which she was again strong, united and fearless.

Now, there have been many faithful servants of the Republic, and it would be foolish to pretend that France owed this revival to M. Poincaré alone. But it can hardly be disputed that one of the greatest artisans of the new France, erect, smiling, and serene, was M. Poincaré.

There were other candidates for the Presidency in 1913 who at first were accorded perhaps more support than M. Poincaré. M. Ribot, the veteran statesman whom someone has called the "speaking reed," was mentioned. M. Deschanel, polished and urbane, bearing the nickname of "Ripolin," was put in the foreground of speculation. His chance was to come later. He succeeded M. Poincaré in 1920, thus attaining his lifelong ambition; but, unfortunately, he fell sick after a few short months of office and died miserably.

M. Pams, who was a wealthy Radical Senator, and who had served as Minister of Agriculture in the Poincaré Cabinet, was, however, the chief opponent of M. Poincaré. It may perhaps be said without

disrespect of M. Pams, who is entirely worthy, that he was a somewhat colourless candidate. But when, not long before the Deputies and Senators went to Versailles to take part in the traditional ceremony of electing a President, it was made known that M. Poincaré, pressed by his friends, had decided to stand, it was at once realised that his election was inevitable. The Radicals might support M. Pams. Republicans as a whole were unanimously in favour of M. Poincaré. M. Deschanel withdrew. M. Ribot publicly retired in favour of M. Poincaré. Thus there were left in the field M. Poincaré and M. Pams. The latter was supported by M. Caillaux, M. Combes, and M. Clemenceau. It was on this occasion that M. Clemenceau, with his irresistible high spirits and his biting tongue which spares neither friend nor foe, declared when asked for whom he would vote, "Je vote pour le plus bête." This undeserved reflection upon M. Pams was hardly calculated to increase his prospects. There was a short and sharp contest. M. Poincaré on the second ballot obtained a conclusive and overwhelming majority. It seemed that M. Poincaré's career was crowned. It was only beginning.

Throughout France there was the utmost enthusiasm, and most of the comments abroad were favourable. But in the minds of some Frenchmen who rejoiced in M. Poincaré's election, there were already doubts. What did it signify? It signified that France with the greatest desire for peace did not intend to brook the interference of Germany. It signified that France had recovered, that patriotism was triumphant. In the following year the Great War began.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRAGIC VOYAGER

It would be difficult to conceive any more dramatic episode than the return of M. Poincaré, who was accompanied by the Prime Minister, M. Viviani, from St. Petersburg (Petrograd) in 1914. The story has never been adequately told, except perhaps by M. Poincaré himself in his book on the origins of the war, where it is buried in a mass of diplomatic detail.

One should begin, perhaps, with the date of June 28, 1914. The President of the Republic was then, as was customary, at Longchamp. It was the day of the Grand Prix. The Ambassador of Austria, the Count Szecsen, was standing by M. Poincaré when a telegram was handed to him announcing the death of the Archduke and the Duchess of Hohenburg. What had happened? The Archduke, François Ferdinand, had left for the military manœuvres in Bosnia. There had been chosen, either by a blunder or by deliberate calculation, the date of June 28th, the "Widowdan," which is for the Serbians the anniversary of the defeat that the Turks inflicted upon them in the year 1839.

All precautions seem to have been neglected. The Archduke and his wife were in an open carriage in the streets of Serajevo among a Slav population which resented the Austro-Hungarian domination. His reception, however, was courteous ; but suddenly, as the procession approached the Hôtel de Ville, a bomb was thrown. Twenty persons were wounded.

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Nevertheless, the order was given to continue to follow the programme of the day. The Archduke received the respects of the municipality and then went to the hospital to visit the wounded officers. While he was on his way a student dashed forward, revolver in hand, and fired twice. The Archduke and the Duchess were both fatally wounded.

There is no day upon which Paris is so jubilant as on the day of the Grand Prix. It is at once a social event and a popular event. The racecourse was crowded; fashions were flaunted, the whole of society had followed the President. The afternoon was extremely hot with brilliant sunshine; but the message containing this news darkened the sun for those who realised what it meant. The diplomatists looked at each other and asked whether this was at last the first shot in the great European War. M. Poincaré immediately expressed his condolences to the representative of Austria and left the tribune.

It is superfluous to relate once more the negotiations which followed this incident. The demands that were made upon Serbia were humiliating. The Great Powers began to range themselves, Germany by the side of Austria pushing to war; France, who was bound by her engagements, on the side of Russia, with, it was hoped, England at her back. It may seem strange that in these circumstances, when peace and war were in the balance, that M. Poincaré, the President of the French Republic, should have left Paris for Russia. But he explains that several months before the visit had been decided upon. He was to visit, not only Russia, but Sweden, Norway and Denmark. From the beginning of 1913 there had been an exchange of visits to inaugurate the Presidency of M. Poincaré. There had been an exchange of visits between the King of England and the President of France and between the King of



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Spain and the President. It was held to be difficult to delay a journey which under previous Presidents had become almost a traditional demonstration of fidelity to the Alliance.

In January M. Doumergue, then Prime Minister, had telegraphed to the Ambassador at St. Petersburg to ask what date would be most suitable to the Emperor. It was suggested that the date should be between the 10th and the 20th of May, or, in default, some date after July 16th. M. Delcassé was then at St. Petersburg, M. Louis having been replaced on account of ill-health. This replacement was subsequently to give rise to criticism on the ground that M. Louis had shown himself pacific, whereas M. Delcassé was much more vigorous and was wedded to the idea of diplomatic combinations which amounted, it was subsequently alleged, to the encirclement of Germany. But M. Delcassé in the month of February asked to be relieved of his functions, and he was succeeded by M. Paléologue.

It is important to insist that the arrangements for the visit of M. Poincaré were all concluded long before the death of the Archduke. Certainly it would be incredible that the French President and the French Prime Minister should deliberately absent themselves from their posts at a moment when the gravest possibilities were in sight if they had conceived any dark design. To have abandoned the projected visit would have been interpreted as a proof that the international situation was desperate. Rightly or wrongly, the Cabinet decided that nothing should be changed.

There is a telegram from the German Ambassador at Vienna, Tschirschky, which reads :

The text of the Note addressed to Serbia is not yet settled. It will be on Sunday, July 19. As for the moment of its presentation to Serbia, it has been decided to-day that it



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will be preferable to await the departure of Poincaré from St. Petersburg, that is to say, the 25th.

From every point of view it would appear regrettable that the plans of M. Poincaré and M. Viviani were not abandoned, since advantage was taken of them to make war more certain. It was on July 15th that the French Chambers agreed upon the 1914 Budget, and the session was closed. At midnight the President and the Prime Minister were at the Gare du Nord, and at five o'clock the next morning they embarked upon the battleship *France*. It is better to tell what happened during the next fortnight more or less in the terms employed by M. Poincaré himself. He asserts that he and M. Viviani sometimes asked themselves during the four days that they were on the sea what would be the outcome of the crisis, but this was a fugitive inquietude. They did not, he declares, dream of the probability of an immediate war.

On July 20th they reached Cronstadt. They were received on the Imperial yacht by the Czar. Their conversation was cordial. The Czar referred to the evil intentions of Austria and of Germany, but they were still ignorant of the preparations which were being made at Vienna and at Berlin.

We had but one thought (writes M. Poincaré), to work with all our might for the maintenance of peace, and assure ourselves that if a new crisis opened, Russia would remain faithful not only to the Alliance with France but also to the Entente with England. We remembered the moderating influence in 1912 and in 1913 of the British Cabinet, and in particular of Sir Edward Grey, and we considered that in all the Balkan difficulties a close accord between London and Paris was the best guarantee of the European concert.

There was at that time some passing disagreement between Russia and England on account of the

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Persian question, and the French visitors insisted in their conversations with the Emperor on the necessity of removing this misunderstanding. The Emperor stated that he wished to remain on the best relations with England, and had written a short time before to King George asking him to favour the conclusion of a defensive Naval Convention between the two countries. A longer talk between M. Poincaré and Nicholas II on July 21st left M. Poincaré with the impression that not only was there no desire for war but not even a belief that war was imminent.

In a toast that M. Poincaré proposed in these days, he spoke as follows :

More than twenty-five years have passed since our two countries united the efforts of their diplomacy, and the happy results of that permanent association are felt more and more every day in the equilibrium of the world. Founded upon a unity of interests, consecrated by the pacific will of the two Governments, supported by the territorial and naval forces which know each other, esteem each other and are accustomed to fraternise, confirmed by a long experience and completed by precious friendships, the Alliance of which the illustrious Emperor, Alexander II, and the late President Carnot took the first initiative, has constantly given proof of its beneficent action and its unshakable solidity. Your Majesty may be assured that to-morrow, as yesterday, France will pursue in an intimate and daily collaboration with her ally the work of peace and of civilisation which the two Governments and the two nations have never ceased to forward.

This pronouncement is significant. M. Poincaré himself remarks that he was surprised that the Emperor did not accompany them on their journey from Peterhof to St. Petersburg. The reason given was that serious strikes had broken out in the town in which the Russian Government saw the hand of Germany. Nevertheless, the streets were filled with a joyous crowd. The two French visitors gave a

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short audience to each of the foreign Ambassadors. Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador, expressed the hope that the Persian Question would be rapidly settled and all cause for dispute disappear between England and Russia. He appears to have been somewhat alarmed at the silence of Austria and the mystery of her intentions. The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, Count Szapary, was extremely reserved. He announced that his Government had decided to make a grave *démarche* at Belgrade. Austria considered the responsibility of Serbia engaged in the crime of Serajevo.

During the following two days there were fêtes in the honour of M. Poincaré and M. Viviani. There appear to have been few diplomatic conversations, and in the evening of July 23rd there was a farewell dinner given by M. Poincaré on the *France* to the Emperor, the Imperial Family and the members of the Russian Government. Nothing was as yet known about the resolution of Austria. The tragic voyagers, M. Poincaré and M. Viviani, were at last alone. They had begun their return journey to France. For me there is something peculiarly heart-rending in the spectacle of these two men, the fêtes finished, the salutes of the cannon silenced, sitting on the deck of the battleship, exchanging their impressions, looking with anxiety towards the far-off shores of their country, and asking themselves in that summer night on the sea what the strange reserve of Austria really signified. It is impossible to imagine that no shadow of the coming war had not fallen athwart their spirits. After the receptions and the jubilations an uneasy silence and a growing fear!

The greatest precautions seem to have been taken by the Central Powers to leave M. Poincaré in ignorance until he should be on the sea four days from

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home. France was without its rulers when the blow fell. Von Jagow had been kept informed of the movements of the French President, and he telegraphed them to Vienna. He gave the warning that if the contemplated *démarche* was made at Belgrade at five o'clock in the evening, it would be known at St. Petersburg before M. Poincaré left. The Ambassador at Vienna, Tschirschky, assured him that the Austrian Minister at Belgrade had been asked to postpone the presentation of the ultimatum for one hour. Thus it came about that at six o'clock on July 23rd the ultimatum was presented to the Serbian Government and was known at St. Petersburg shortly after the departure of the *France*.

It is obvious that the object was to prevent all immediate conversation between France and Russia on this subject. The conclusion of M. Poincaré is that Austria and Germany had decided to stop as far as possible any move for peace until it was too late. Nevertheless, the tragic voyagers seemed instinctively to have realised what was happening, and at one o'clock in the morning a telegram was sent by M. Viviani to M. Bienvenu Martin, who was replacing him at the Quai d'Orsay, asking him to come to an agreement with M. Sazonoff to delay any step on the part of Austria which would be directed against Serbian independence. "It was," says M. Poincaré simply, "too late." In the early morning of the 24th, whilst they were still in the Gulf of Finland, there arrived by wireless telegraphy a résumé of the Austrian Note. That Note is known. It is brutal. The two French chiefs, imprisoned on their battleship, practically deprived of means of action, conscious of their comparative helplessness, with the sensation of having been caught in a trap, impatient that the vessel should make swifter progress, consulted each other. M. Viviani telegraphed

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to London and to St. Petersburg, advising that Serbia should offer all satisfaction compatible with her honour and with her independence, that a further delay should be granted by Austria, that England, Russia and France should support the demand for delay, that the Triple Entente should ascertain whether it was not still possible to substitute an International Inquiry for the Austro-Serbian Inquiry that was proposed.

As they came nearer to Sweden, disquieting telegrams reached them. They arrived at Stockholm to learn worse and worse news. Herr Von Schoen, the German Ambassador at Paris, had spoken of the incalculable consequences of any intervention of other Powers in the dispute between Austria and Serbia. The King of Sweden informed M. Poincaré that the Minister of Austria had quitted Belgrade ; the Austro-Hungarian Government had mobilised several army corps. In spite of these sinister preparations, the President and the Prime Minister, victims of the protocol, were obliged to pass the day at Stockholm and to participate in ceremony after ceremony. Their hearts were not in these receptions. The formal smile of exalted persons on State occasions concealed a gnawing anxiety.

M. Poincaré, in his lectures on " *Les Origines de la Guerre* " asks what they could have done. The French Government had not warned them to return directly, and they were afraid of frightening public opinion by a precipitate entry. They still thought that they could perhaps visit Copenhagen and Christiania. But on the 26th, while they were in the Baltic, it was announced to them that the Kaiser had interrupted his sea trip and was making all haste towards Kiel.

But (adds M. Poincaré) in our floating home there reached us only the deadened echoes of the outside world. We received



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nothing precise, either from St. Petersburg or from Paris. We were more and more anxious in our solitude and in our remoteness, and the Sunday passed away without bringing us, lost between the sky and the waves, positive news from land.

In the meantime the French Press and public opinion in France was uttering reproaches against the tragic voyagers. Why did they postpone their delay when the war-clouds were accumulating on the horizon? Some hints of this at last reached M. Poincaré, and it was decided to telegraph to the King of Denmark and to the King of Norway that they must return immediately. There was no time to be lost. As they sailed with the menace growing formidably, they encountered a German cruiser. It saluted them. Then they encountered a German torpedo boat. It did not salute them. It turned in its course and hastened towards the Kiel Canal. A few hours later they received a message that, although the Serbian Government had made in its response only two small reserves, diplomatic relations had been broken off between Austro-Hungary and Serbia. Telegram on telegram arrived. They were feverishly deciphered; some of them it was impossible to understand, but hour by hour the situation became darker and darker. Europe was seething with excitement. Ambassadors in every capital were making *démarches*. Foreign Ministers were everywhere giving instructions. Cabinets were sitting almost continually; suggestion on suggestion was made. M. Poincaré and M. Viviani, feeling their isolation more and more, were piecing together the disjointed information which was captured from time to time by the antennæ of the *France*.

It was in a state of mental agony that, on the morning of the 29th, they arrived in sight of Dunkirk. At last they touched French soil, which, says M.

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Poincaré, "pendant les interminables longueurs de la traversée nous avait paru si effroyablement lointain." Impossible to stop in the port as they had promised, they made their excuses to the mayor of the town and rushed for the Paris train. They note that on the jetties and along the railway there was a dense crowd, a multitude which was trembling with excitement but which revealed a patriotic resolution which touched the President and the Prime Minister to tears. Swiftly they noted as they passed station after station the same spectacle. France was ready for any eventuality. Precautionary measures had been taken. Soldiers had been warned to return to their garrisons, officials had been ordered to remain at their posts, foodstuffs had been bought for Paris, the mobilisation which was foreseen had been prepared. M. Messimy, the War Minister, with all the other Members of the Government, awaited them at the Gare du Nord. Their interminable voyage had ended. "Paris is splendid!" cried M. Messimy. It was a great moment for M. Poincaré.

Never (he declares) have I seen such a profoundly moving manifestation. In the open landau where I took my place beside M. Viviani I regarded with heavily weighted breast that innumerable population that had come from all quarters of the town and which was crushed at all the windows, on all the pavements. It had one cry, "Vive la France!" It had one soul; it expressed only one thought and one purpose. "Do everything possible still," said Paris to us, "to spare us the horrors of a war; but if you do not succeed, have confidence in us. All of us, for what we are, will know how to fulfil our duty."

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LETTER-WRITER

THE three great acts of M. Poincaré's political life have been stated to be as follows : the first his letter to the King of England on his return to Paris from Russia ; the second his reconciliation with M. Clemenceau in spite of the insults of the bitter-tongued " Tiger " ; and the third his acceptance of the invitation to form a Ministry after the Conference of Cannes. It may be that this statement is more epigrammatic than true. But undoubtedly his communication to the King of England cannot be omitted in any work which purports to mark the memorable dates of M. Poincaré's career. It ran :

*July 31, 1914.*

CHER ET GRAND AMI,

In the grave circumstances that Europe traverses, I believe it to be my duty to communicate directly to Your Majesty the information that the Government of the Republic has received from Germany. The military preparations of the Imperial Government, notably in the immediate neighbourhood of the French frontier, take on each day a new intensity and are accelerated. France, resolved to perform until the end all that depends upon her to maintain the peace, has confined herself so far to the most indispensable measures of precaution, but it does not seem that her prudence and her moderation slacken the dispositions of Germany. Indeed, far from it. We are then, perhaps, in spite of the wisdom of the Government of the Republic and the calm of public opinion, on the eve of the most redoubtable events. From all the information which reaches us, it results that

if Germany had the certitude that the British Government would not intervene in a conflict in which France should be engaged, the war would be inevitable; but, on the other hand, if Germany had the certitude that the Entente Cordiale would be asserted in case of need upon the fields of battle, there would be the greatest possible chance that the peace would not be troubled. Without doubt our military and naval accords leave wholly free the Government of Your Majesty, and in the letters exchanged in 1912 between Sir Edward Grey and Monsieur Paul Cambon, England and France simply engaged themselves to consult each other in case of European tension and examine together whether they should take any action. But the character of intimacy that the public sentiment has given in the two countries to the Entente between England and France, the confidence with which our two Governments have never ceased to work for the maintenance of peace, the sympathy that Your Majesty has always shown for France, authorise me to make known to you with all frankness my impressions which are those of the Government of the Republic and of the whole of France. It is, I believe, on the language and on the conduct of the British Government that depends from now the last possibilities of pacific solution. We have ourselves from the beginning of the crisis recommended to our Allies the moderation from which they have not departed. In accord with the Royal Government and in conformity with the last suggestions of Sir Edward Grey, we will continue to act in the same sense. But if all the efforts of conciliation are on the same side, and if Germany and Austria can speculate upon the abstention of England, the exigencies of Austria will remain inflexible and an accord will become impossible between Russia and Austria. I have the profound conviction that at the present hour the more England, France and Russia give a strong impression of unity in their diplomatic action, the more we may permit ourselves to count upon the preservation of peace. Your Majesty will excuse a *démarche* which is inspired only by the desire of seeing the European equilibrium definitely reaffirmed.

I pray Your Majesty to believe in my most cordial sentiments.

RAYMOND POINCARÉ.

The reply of the King, dated from Buckingham Palace on August 1st, expressed appreciation of the



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sentiments which had caused M. Poincaré to write in so cordial and friendly a spirit. It assured him that the situation in Europe had given much anxiety, and the King was happy to believe that the two Governments had worked together to find a pacific solution of the questions in litigation. It would be a source of real satisfaction if these united efforts could succeed, and he was not without hope that the terrible events which seemed so near might yet be averted. He admired the constraint which the French Government was exercising in abstaining from taking upon the frontier undue military measures, and in adopting an attitude which could not in any manner be interpreted as a provocation. He was personally using his best influence upon the Emperors of Russia and of Germany to find some means by which military operations could in any case be adjourned and time be gained for a calm discussion between the Powers. He had the intention of pursuing these efforts without pause, as long as there remained the hope of a friendly arrangement. As to the attitude of his country, the events were changing so rapidly that it was difficult to foresee future developments, but M. Poincaré could be sure that his Government would continue to discuss freely and frankly with M. Cambon any point which might arise and which would present an interest for the two countries.

In the first place, this letter, though it seems sufficiently to promise British support, could not be definitely represented as demonstrating the solidarity of France, Russia and England ; but in any case, at the moment when this letter arrived, all hope had gone. Just after seven o'clock on August 1st Germany declared war on Russia. The French still asked what attitude England would take. England had taken up strong positions in the Channel and



in the North Sea, and the next day a formal promise of British naval protection was given.

It should be noted that M. Viviani withdrew the French troops from the frontier. They were placed ten kilomètres from the frontier in order to prevent any incident which could possibly justify the declaration of war on France. Then came the German menace to Belgian neutrality, which finally decided England to come into the war were Belgium invaded.

On August 4th M. Poincaré wrote again to the King, thanking His Majesty and stating that the declarations made in the House of Commons had had a profound effect in France. The Entente Cordiale between the two countries was closer than ever, and the news of common action had been received by public opinion with joy and emotion. The accord was complete between their two navies, but they were not yet informed whether His Majesty's Government had definitely fixed its intentions with regard to a territorial co-operation. King Albert of Belgium had appealed to the French as he had appealed to the British for the defence of Belgian territory. The Government of the Republic considered that if it was possible for England to debark at once in France, in order to proceed to Belgium, the military units of which she could dispose and whose collaboration would be infinitely precious, that measure which would furnish the public proof of their fraternity of arms would produce in Belgium and in France the most salutary effect.

We know that this appeal did not rest unanswered. It is a pity that now in both countries the spirit of those critical days is not more vividly present to men's minds.

The history of the war cannot, of course, find its place in this book. But a tribute must be paid to M. Poincaré for the supreme efforts he made to

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preserve peace and for the magnificent and sincere diplomacy which he displayed in making British support, once the war had become inevitable, absolutely certain.

It was M. Poincaré who above all brought about the unity of Frenchmen of all parties. M. Viviani has related how M. Poincaré made his appeal for the *union sacrée*, and how two men, M. de Mun, a representative of the past, that is to say, of the Ancien Régime, and M. Vaillant, the representative of the Revolution—these two old men—went towards each other in a symbolical reconciliation. The deplorable murder of the great Socialist orator, perhaps the greatest orator that France has ever had, M. Jean Jaurès, on the eve of the war had for a moment threatened this national unity. But the Socialists, forgetting their own griefs, immediately proclaimed their patriotism. The whole nation for long years held together with a fortitude, a solidity, that amazed those superficial observers who had accepted frivolity and instability as characteristics of the French nation. Nobody was more responsible for the remarkable change, and no one man was more the author of the new France, than was M. Poincaré.

In the dreadful days, the hours of anguish, many other men played their part—M. Deschanel, who eloquently interpreted the determination of the country; M. Millerand, who organised the defence; M. Briand, who later as Prime Minister inspired the Army to remain firm in its trenches; and others, including, of course, the greatest of them all, M. Clemenceau.

The soldiers were splendid. Joffre, Pétain, Foch, are the three outstanding figures of France on the military side.

Some light on M. Poincaré's mind is thrown by

M. Stéphane Lauzanne, who records in his book, *Les Hommes que j'ai vue*, that before the war M. Poincaré had said to him :

I have studied all the documents relating to the Morocco affair. There results from this study a conviction : it is that each time that we have desired to be conciliatory towards Germany, she has abused our conciliatory overtures. Each time, on the contrary, that we have shown ourselves firm, she has receded. Germany does not understand the language of right ; she understands only the use of force. Further (he had stated) pan-Germanism is the incontestable master of Germany. It demands war and it will make war.

Acting on this conviction, he stimulated his Ministers to greater and greater activity. Some day there will perhaps be published the notes which almost daily he addressed to his Ministers to put them on guard against such and such a danger, or to recommend to them such and such a measure. In the meantime it may be stated without fear of contradiction that his rôle as chief of the State was fulfilled admirably. He did not hesitate for one moment. "Jusqu'au bout," was his cry. M. Clemenceau, who had no particular liking for him, who was, indeed, in every circumstance his adversary, said this of him : "One is bound to render this justice to Poincaré and Foch, that they never showed any signs of weakness."

Unfortunately, things went badly for France and for her British Allies. The month of August was a month of disaster. Most terrible of all, defeat after defeat brought Paris into imminent danger. The Germans seemed to be irresistible. They came within a day's march of the capital. The authorities advised an immediate transference of the seat of Government to Bordeaux, and on the 3rd of September M. Poincaré and the Government were installed in that town, leaving Paris to its fate. With memories

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of 1870, they decided that whatever was to happen to Paris, the war should be continued. In France itself the critics of M. Poincaré have twitted him unmercifully with this desertion of the capital. No criticism could be more unfair. In the first place, the President was extremely reluctant to leave the Elysée. He did so only under the strongest pressure of his advisers. I have seen him in far too many difficult circumstances to doubt for one moment of his personal courage : he is too timid to behave otherwise than with courage. But the responsibility was enormous. If the seat of Government was captured, as seemed almost certain, the capitulation of the Allies could not have been long delayed. There was no other course open to the Government than to go. The Army insisted ; the highest interests of the country commanded.

Since M. Klotz in his book on the war and the peace has made certain revelations, it is now permissible to state that this contingency had been foreseen as early as 1912 by M. Poincaré, who was then Prime Minister. Particularly had he discussed with the War Minister and the Minister of Finance the measures that should be taken. The Bank of France had prepared and had distributed in advance a large number of small notes. Instructions had been sent out to all the branches of the bank. The moment that Paris was in peril, before the public was aware of the gravity of the situation, the Bank of France had removed to places of security its gold deposits and its title deeds. From August 18th to September 3rd whole trains carried away from Paris without interruption 36 million francs' worth of silver, 4 milliard francs' worth of gold, 14 million documents which were in the care of the bank. The headquarters of the bank were at Bordeaux ; at Paris there was left a simple branch. Nevertheless,



it was impossible to leave Paris without money. In a hiding-place which has never been revealed, and which it was hoped the Germans would never find, there were left 25 million francs of gold and bank-notes to the value of 250 million.

It was resolved that nothing should fall into the hands of Germany. If the worst happened, then arrangements which had been made in advance would be instantly carried out. There would be a complete evacuation or a complete destruction. The headquarters staff was to telephone to the bank four successive commands. The first was "Attention." The second was "Chargez." The third "Partez." The fourth "Brulez." At the first signal everybody was to prepare for action; at the second, the treasures of the bank were to be placed upon motor lorries, which were always ready to start. At the third, they were to leave Paris; at the fourth, everything that remained was to be burnt. Had the Germans entered Paris, they would have seized nothing. Happily, General Gallieni won the battle of the Ourcq, and Joffre issued his famous order that no flinching was to be tolerated; the Battle of Marne was begun; Von Kluck was thwarted and Paris was saved.

The behaviour of the American Ambassador, Mr. Myron Herrick, who decided to stay behind in Paris and to take the French buildings and citizens under his protection, cannot be praised too highly. Utterly fearless, he not only performed a generous act, but his example became a great diplomatic act which subsequently brought America to the side of France.

M. Klotz has spoken of the difficulties that arose between the Bordeaux Government and the Paris authorities. He was himself left in charge of a press bureau—that is to say, of a censorship. Obviously,



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there were bound to be minor quarrels between Bordeaux and Paris, but it would be entirely wrong to make much of them, as it would be wrong to make much of the blunders of the censorship. If there were to be no discrepancies, no anomalies, it would have been necessary that a single man with an encyclopedic knowledge should himself without assistance accomplish the whole task. The complaints of M. Klotz against Bordeaux, that is to say, against M. Poincaré and the Government, seem to me to be small matters. It is natural that Bordeaux should have been extremely nervous. There seems even to have been some apprehension that a *coup d'état* might be prepared at Paris. Those who remained behind in Paris disposed of the Army. Bordeaux, when assailed by sudden fears, sent M. Briand and M. Marcel Sembat to Paris to render some account of what was happening. M. Klotz adds rather maliciously, they were so content at Paris that it was believed for a moment that they also would enter into the plot, and they were asked by telephone to return to their colleagues at Bordeaux without further delay.

The evidence, however, indicates that there was some unreasonable jealousy indulged in by Bordeaux. Gallieni received orders not to make any communications to the Press that had not been telephoned or telegraphed from the town which was temporarily the capital of France, and the Eiffel Tower, used as a wireless station, was by special decision attached to Bordeaux. Moreover, when the victory of the Marne was at last won, Bordeaux did not at first realise the changed circumstances, and the congratulations of Joffre to the Army were published three days late. Indeed, it is said that the taking of Maubeuge has never been officially announced because Bordeaux omitted to give permission. All this,

however, is of trivial importance, and it is surprising that it should be raked up at this moment.

Before the coming of M. Clemenceau, M. Poincaré had four Prime Ministers : M. Viviani was succeeded by M. Briand, and M. Briand by M. Ribot. Then came M. Painlevé, with his short-lived Ministry, from the end of July to November 13, 1917. No period of the war has given rise to so much discussion as the period which is covered by the Ribot and Painlevé Ministries in 1917. The long-drawn struggle had produced a tension of spirits that might easily have had the most serious consequences. The generals were falling out among themselves ; the plans of General Nivelle were not approved, and certain important plans were captured by the enemy. Foch himself was in disgrace ; Sir Douglas Haig was not on good terms with General Nivelle ; the Russian Revolution occurred in March. There were heavy losses on the French and British fronts. M. Painlevé stopped the offensive of April 16th, which was resulting in disaster. The moral of the Army was at its lowest. There were mutinies on the French front which were undoubtedly of some importance. Everybody was suffering from the fatigue of the war. Blunders had been committed again and again. Pétain was at last made General-in-Chief, and Foch was made Chief of the Headquarters Staff. No more critical moment had been experienced. The danger of a crack was apparent.

The rôle that M. Painlevé played appears to me to have been entirely salutary, and his recently published book, *Comment j'ai nommé Foch et Pétain*, is an unanswerable vindication. He was not responsible for the difficulties, but, on the contrary, he tried to remove them. At the same time, it was clear that a supreme assertion of authority had become necessary. I remember that in Paris there was

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profound discouragement, and I heard on all hands clamours for the cessation of the war at all costs. I doubt whether the full gravity of this moment has ever been realised in high places. Something new was needed; a fresh start was imperative, if *défaitisme* was not to prevail. This was the hour of trial. Only one man could save the situation. That man was Clemenceau.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE WAR PRESIDENT

THE second great act in M. Poincaré's career was, according to the epigram to which we have already referred, the acceptance of M. Clemenceau as Prime Minister. There were serious questions in dispute between the two men, and the President of the Republic had good reason to be angry with the sharp-tongued old statesman who had never spared him. They were at the opposite poles in character, in their modes of expression; but when Ministries were being bowled down like nine-pins in France, when Ribot succeeded to Briand and Painlevé to Ribot, and Painlevé was overthrown, all in the space of a few months, it became clear that France was losing the war, that a spirit of discontent that might easily turn into despair and revolt and result in an ignominious surrender and a dishonourable peace which would have enslaved France for generations, perhaps for ever, was rapidly developing.

The friends of M. Poincaré and of M. Clemenceau immediately endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation. The crisis with which France was faced was such that neither the President nor M. Clemenceau dared to hesitate. It was perhaps easier for M. Clemenceau than for M. Poincaré, for although Clemenceau roars in anger, he does not bear malice, and although he attacks fiercely without respect of persons, he is ready to recover his bonhomie at any moment. But he had deeply offended M. Poincaré

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by his constant gibes, and M. Poincaré does not forget so easily. He somewhat feared this *enfant terrible* who remains irresponsible, who, with remarkable insight, with flashes of genius, with indomitable courage, with an iron will, is yet capable of the most enormous blunders committed in sheer gaiety of heart. In normal times M. Clemenceau would have been impossible. In time of war, with his tyrannical manner, he was just tolerable—and he was indispensable.

If at first M. Poincaré responded to the advice that was given him in that dry, sharp manner which indicates that he is offended, he quickly saw that personal grievances could not be cherished at such an hour. When he consented to call M. Clemenceau to the head of a new Government, the reconciliation was real. Both men expressed genuine emotion when M. Poincaré agreed to forget the contemptuous manner and the daily insults of the old Tiger, and M. Clemenceau promised his full collaboration to the man whom he had regarded as narrow, pedantic, without warmth and without imagination. They had each misunderstood the other, but they realised that they had one point in common, their intense patriotism, their resolve to hold out to the last gasp and to conquer. The will to victory was in different ways equally expressed by them both.

Power makes of M. Clemenceau an entirely different man. In the three years of opposition he had, contrary to the common belief, been far from helpful. His critical faculties were most in evidence. He assailed everybody and everything. When in the early part of the war the Government went to Bordeaux, Parliament was practically dissolved. Clemenceau rightly demanded the convocation of Parliament at the earliest possible date. He insisted on the necessity of control by the two Chambers



with their commissions of the Army and of foreign affairs. Curiously enough, it was Clemenceau who first suggested the censorship. He demanded an absolute control of all military and diplomatic information in the Press. He remembered the feverish state of opinion in 1870, and he believed it would be fatal to allow the Press to run amuck. But a censorship must necessarily be arbitrary, and M. Clemenceau, pugnacious, vitriolic, writing of all the defects of administration without mincing his words, was himself likely to spread panic. He was the first victim of the censorship he had himself invoked. He denounced all kinds of negligences. Public opinion was beginning to be troubled. When he was called upon to stay his pen, he refused to submit. Thereupon his journal was suppressed. He changed its title from that of *L'Homme Libre* to that of *L'Homme Enchaîné*—a terrible joke which greatly embarrassed the authorities. The President of the Republic was the object of his criticisms. There were those who asked that M. Clemenceau should be prevented from writing. There were even those who asked that he should be tried by a military tribunal. There was, of course, both bad and good in this method. Clemenceau brought about reforms by his outspokenness, but he was also at times discouraging and dangerous. He is essentially the polemist, and polemics in war-time are usually to be deprecated.

Still, Clemenceau's popularity grew. His newspaper was read by the soldiers, who found their grumblings expressed for them more forcibly than they could express them themselves. A strange mixture is Clemenceau—the strangest mixture of irascibility, of irresponsibility, of wisdom and of vigour that I have known, but always profoundly human : in short, the repository of that indefinable

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thing which is called genius. His indefatigable appeals, his incessant proclamation that everything should be subordinated to the war, made him the most outstanding figure in France. His popularity grew greater and greater. He dreaded above all an inconclusive peace. He, too, was a man of 1870. He, too, had always remembered. He, too, remembered with even more vigour than M. Poincaré, or rather, while M. Poincaré burned inwardly, he blazed outwardly. He wore, as I have said, a gigantic *panache*, and even before he became Prime Minister constantly visited the trenches, mingled with the soldiers, and impressed the whole country with his confidence and his fearlessness.

On July 22, 1917, in the Senate he pronounced a speech which is historical. There had grown up in France the movement which was described as *défaitisme*. In part, it was directed by genuine pacifists who were anxious to prevent the prolongation of bloodshed and believed that a peace of compromise was above all desirable. But in part it was directed by the most ignoble elements in France; those who were consciously or unconsciously friends of the enemy, and who in many cases saw the opportunity of stirring up trouble to their profit and of fishing in the disturbed waters, those who were in some cases directly in the pay of the enemy. Around the sincere pacifists there fluttered the spies and the adventurers, and the strange tolerance which was extended to anti-militarist manœuvres provoked the indignation of M. Clemenceau. He denounced the *Bonnet Rouge*, edited by Almereyda, whose assumed name is an indecent anagram. He accused the Minister of the Interior, Malvy, of allowing passports to be issued with extraordinary laxity. There is no doubt that Paris was overrun with spies. M. Malvy, who subsequently demanded that he should

be tried by the high court of the Senate and was sentenced to banishment for five years, was a victim of the system which prevails in France. His excuse was that he did not wish to fight the militants of the working-class. It is an unfortunate fact that the connection between the police and the syndicalist, and even anarchist organisations, leaves much to be desired. The principle of permitting and even encouraging anarchism to express itself, in order that the police shall be aware of its operations, is adopted : the secret funds of the Government were given to newspapers which were anti-Nationalist, on the ground that this was the best way of keeping them within bounds. The result of the denunciation by M. Clemenceau was the arrest of many persons and a series of trials which culminated two years later in the trial of M. Caillaux by the Senate and his condemnation.

A few months after this speech, the demand for M. Clemenceau was irresistible. His Ministers included M. Pichon, M. Pams, M. Klotz, M. Loucheur, M. Léygues, who became Prime Minister after M. Millerand was in 1920 raised to the Presidency, and M. Jonnart. M. Clemenceau preached the *guerre intégrale*. There were to be no more pacific campaigns, no more German manœuvres in France, no more treason, no more demi-treason. There was to be nothing but the war. There can be no doubt that M. Clemenceau was an inspiring force. He rallied the whole country. Bolo Pacha was executed. Mata Hari, the dancer, was shot at Vincennes ; Almereyda was found strangled in his cell ; Duval, one of the directors of the *Bonnet Rouge*, upon whom was found a cheque for 100,000 francs after a journey to Switzerland, and Lenoir, the son of a publicity agent who had distributed *largesse* to the Press, were also executed. Caillaux was arrested.

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While this purification went on in the interior, the armies were reconstructed. Nevertheless, although courage had been restored, although everybody now believed that victory would attend the French efforts, the military situation remained grave. The Germans not only battered the Allied front, but their long-range guns bombarded Paris and their aeroplanes flew over the capital. Had the moral of the people not been sound, had this occurred a year earlier, before Clemenceau took over the command, there is little doubt that France would have collapsed, as Russia had collapsed.

In March 1918 even M. Clemenceau considered Paris to be in peril. He went to the Elysée and saw M. Poincaré. He told the President that he had come from Compiègne. He had seen General Pétain, and it was necessary to make preparations for the evacuation of Paris. Those who had blamed the Government for its earlier flight to Bordeaux had now a proof of the courage of M. Poincaré. He leapt to his feet. "There cannot be question of evacuating Paris," he said decisively. M. Clemenceau was doubtful, but he promised to return the same evening to Compiègne and to have another conversation with Pétain and to telephone to the Elysée in the course of the evening. In the evening the telephone rang. M. Poincaré heard the unwelcome news that Pétain still advised the second evacuation of Paris. But M. Poincaré was adamant. "We will talk of that later," he said, and hung up the receiver. He sat down at his desk, and while the German aeroplanes were dropping their bombs on Paris, the President was calmly writing a letter to the Prime Minister declaring that such a step could not be contemplated. It would be misunderstood by the population. He urged that at all costs resistance should be offered. In any case, before a resolution



of this character was taken, he insisted that a Council of Ministers should be called. The next day the Council was held. M. Clemenceau, who had been disposed to agree with Pétain, had been influenced by the attitude of the President, and he agreed that there should be some postponement of a decision which would have been interpreted as a surrender.

Two days afterwards a memorable meeting took place at Doullens. The President, M. Poincaré, who accompanied his Prime Minister, encountered the British representatives. This was perhaps the greatest scene in the history of the war. Sir Douglas Haig was in the town hall of the little town in conference with his staff. The President, in order not to interrupt him, walked up and down the square in front of the town hall. In the group that was thus exposed to the sharp March wind was M. Clemenceau, M. Loucheur and Foch. Foch announced that orders had been given for a retreat. The evacuation of Paris, according to the general military opinion, was ineluctable. But Foch supported M. Poincaré. He protested that it was only necessary to make a supreme effort, to give the order that there should be no further retreat, and Paris would be saved.

The relations between Foch and Clemenceau at this moment were not of the best, but the old statesman was impressed with the energy and the confidence of the great general. While this conversation was proceeding, there emerged from the Hôtel de Ville Haig and Lord Milner. The British Conference was ended, and it was now for the British and French to confer together. M. Poincaré sat in the centre of the table, with Lord Milner on his right and M. Clemenceau on his left. Haig, Foch and Pétain were there. M. Loucheur acted as secretary. M. Lauzanne has described the scene. "M. Poincaré,"

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he says, " was calm ; M. Clemenceau caustic ; Lord Milner phlegmatic ; Foch nervous ; Pétain impenetrable ; while Haig had the harassed face of a man who had not slept for three nights. The President opened the Conference, and with his characteristic lucidity, which he never lost even in the most troubled moments, exposed the situation. He urged that the Germans should be arrested where they were ; that Paris should be preserved at any price. Haig said that he would defend Amiens to the last. Foch interrupted to assert that they should stop the enemy before Amiens. He repeated the plan of campaign that he had discussed in the cold square. Lord Milner took M. Clemenceau aside. " There is the man," he said several times. Haig joined this company which was conversing apart, and it is to his immortal credit that he then and there consented to a commander-in-chief who should be placed above him and above Pétain. He had, indeed, two days before telegraphed in this sense to his Government, as he informed M. Poincaré when he took leave of him after the war.

It was on March 24th that I was convinced of the necessity of having a single commander-in-chief who should be imposed upon Pétain and myself, when I received the orders of withdrawal of General Pétain. I understood then that we did not agree, and that we were marching towards the loss of our two armies. The only way of saving ourselves was to have above us a man to whom we should both be subordinated. It is for that reason that I asked London to send a member of the British Government to come to an understanding with the French Government for the nomination of General Foch as commander-in-chief of the Allied armies.

The result of this conference was that presently M. Clemenceau advanced towards the table and proposed to Pétain to imitate the example of Haig and to put himself under the orders of Foch. Pétain

immediately agreed. M. Loucheur thereupon elaborated a declaration, according to which General Foch was given the mission of co-ordinating the efforts of the two armies. It was signed in pencil by the representatives of the two Governments—perhaps the most important document of the war—on a sheet of paper supplied by the Mayor of Doullens.

I have related this incident because it throws light upon the character of M. Poincaré. It represents him as he really is : a man who, timid in appearance, often hesitating, perhaps not possessing the physical courage of Clemenceau, nevertheless, with a nervous energy that is exceptional, can, when he sees his duty, face it unflinchingly and with a determination surpassed by none. There has been controversy, as there has been controversy on every incident of the war and of the peace which followed, about the part that each actor played, and although there is no desire to take from Lord Milner the credit of nominating Foch, it is certain that M. Poincaré and Foch had in this tragic hour, big with possibilities, the same clear vision of the duty of France. Without these two men, Paris would in all probability have fallen. This was the deed which decided the fate of the battle.

Nor must the aid that America brought be forgotten. The American soldiers had been rushed across the Atlantic. They had been hastily trained and inured to combat. Their weight was now fully thrown into the scale. For some time the Germans appeared still to be winning, but the Allied armies had now a single command, they were co-ordinated, and at the proper moment Foch struck. On July 18th the force of their final blow was spent, and they began the retreat which was presently to become a rout. They recrossed the Marne, abandoning Soissons, Noyon, Peronne. The Americans entered St. Mihiel ;

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the Chemin des Dames was captured ; the Allies entered St. Quentin, Cambrai, Laon, Lille, Ostend. The North of France and Belgium were being delivered.

Austria had already demanded peace. In October, Germany, Austria and Turkey together asked for an armistice. There were pourparlers. Mr. Wilson made his celebrated declarations. The Armistice was eventually concluded on November 11th. M. Poincaré a few days later visited Metz and Strasbourg, where he was received with unparalleled rejoicing.

This summary account scarcely does justice to the Lorrainer who was beyond question one of the artisans of the victory. He had during the course of the war, especially in its latter stages, been overshadowed by the generals and by M. Clemenceau. Nothing should be said that will detract in any way from the remarkable services which M. Clemenceau rendered to his country and to the Allies. But although his part was the more conspicuous, the wise counsel, the imperturbable calm, the steel-like resolution of the President of the Republic should be praised in the highest degree. It was perhaps because M. Poincaré's less ostentatious virtues and his capacity for endurance, his stubbornness, if you will, were not fully appreciated by the British and by the Americans, that so many mistakes in tactics were committed when the diplomatic struggle between France and England began a few years later. It was thought that he was a weak man who would yield under pressure. There could be no greater misconception. Although he made no profession of military qualities, although he was not in the public eye as were others during the war, it was his cold resolve during his occupancy of the Elysée which, more than once, as I have shown, redeemed the situation. His appeals to France to stand firm when



she was on the point of yielding were a deciding factor.

As a diplomatist he was later to display the same absolute rigidity. Having made up his mind to a course of action, he would pursue it if the whole world should rise against him. It was not by bullying, it was not by intimidation, it was not by the empty menaces of the Curzon Notes that M. Poincaré was to be deflected from his purpose. Obstinate, relentlessly, he persisted in his policy. M. Poincaré is slender only as a blade of finest steel is slender.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PEACE PRESIDENT

WHY did not M. Poincaré resign the Presidency of the Republic rather than consent to a peace which he considered inimical to France? Even at the time it was an open secret that M. Poincaré and M. Clemenceau, during the proceedings of the Conference at Paris, were at loggerheads. Letter after letter was written by the President protesting against this proposal and against that. M. Poincaré had already suffered from what he regarded as the precipitate Armistice. He had felt that the Germans ought to be pursued into the heart of Germany and not allowed to return with drums beating and flags flying. It was, however, difficult to create a national crisis at a moment of general jubilation. France was well pleased with the ending of the war and was anxious to lay down her arms at the earliest possible moment. But the opposition between M. Clemenceau and M. Poincaré on the terms of the Treaty was surely such that M. Poincaré, holding the views that he held, would have been justified in pressing them even to the point where they would have involved his resignation. The President did, in fact, nearly resign. He was on the point of doing so, but his friends and advisers pointed out the grave inconveniences that would result. The Conference would have been wrecked; the Allied Ministers gathered together in Paris would have departed with the most painful impression of French political life. It may well be

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that nothing more serious would have happened to the Alliance than has subsequently happened. But at the moment, at any rate, the possible consequences of a Presidential revolt seemed too appalling even to be contemplated. M. Poincaré agreed to a peace which he disliked, and then, by a curious paradox, became the most ardent supporter of the Treaty.

To understand the position of M. Poincaré at this time, it is necessary to explain the powers of the President of the French Republic. The French conception of the President is that of a figure-head who has even less power than a constitutional monarch. He is regarded as irresponsible; indeed, he is protected from prosecution for his acts and can only be impeached in case of high treason. But responsibility must go with effective power, and the President has neither. President MacMahon is the most notable example of a chief magistrate who endeavoured to impose his own will. He came into opposition with Parliament and he was broken. It must always be so. M. Millerand has, indeed, tried to lay down new principles, but he has certainly not succeeded. He may from time to time have intervened in foreign affairs to some purpose, but, on the whole, M. Millerand has become like any ordinary holder of this great but helpless office.

A Presidential proclamation must be countersigned by a Minister. It is the Ministers who actually exercise authority. The President presides, but does not govern; and yet, according to the constitution, the President is nominally given great powers. M. Poincaré, in his book, *How France is Governed*, himself explains that in international relations

the President of the French Republic plays a part of capital importance. In respect of foreign Powers he is the unique and permanent representative of France. The envoys and ambassadors of these Powers are accredited to him by their

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respective Governments. It is the President who negotiates and ratifies treaties. He negotiates them (and this is the real point) through the medium and the responsibility of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He ratifies them, that is, he confirms them after their conclusion. He may keep them secret if the interest and security of the State shall require, acquainting the Chamber only when he considers it opportune. This right in the hands of the head of the State would be dangerous were it not tempered and limited by the rights of Parliament. Thus treaties of peace and of commerce, treaties which involve the finance of the State and those which relate to the personal status and the rights of property of French persons abroad, are not definitive until they have been voted by the two Chambers. The exceptions are so numerous that they become the rule. There remain few international conventions which the executive power has the right to confirm without previously obtaining their adoption by the legislative power.

Thus M. Poincaré defines the position in the most favourable terms. In reality, the President is even more impotent than a reading of the constitution would lead one to believe. There is always in these matters a difference between theory and practice. It is all very well to point to some clause of the constitution, but if Parliament and the country is opposed in its conception to the exercise even of this nominal control, it would be foolish for the President to fly in the face of public opinion. If the President has a weak Prime Minister, it may well be that he will be able to dominate the whole situation. But if he has a strong Prime Minister, he is entirely at the mercy of the direct representative of Parliament. The prerogatives which he holds are useless. While he would appear to have many rights, there are two lines of the law of February 1875 which annul them all. They read: Each act of the President of the Republic must be countersigned by a Minister. Any communication with the Chambers must be made through a Minister.

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Any ceremony in which the President is to take part must be authorised by a Minister. It is a Minister who negotiates treaties, and the President can protest only in private letters. In the last resort he can, of course, resign, but he may well hesitate before taking such a course. The Prime Minister may be and usually is a sort of gaoler of the President. M. Clemenceau was sometimes a brutal gaoler.

In the making of the peace M. Poincaré was certainly not consulted. He was present at that first meeting in the Salle de l'Horloge at the Quai d'Orsay, where seventy delegates were assembled. But that was all. I well remember that scene, when the President made his speech of welcome. In the light of what we now know, there are passages which seem ironical.

You will (said M. Poincaré) seek nothing but justice ; justice that has no favourites ; justice in territorial problems ; justice in financial problems ; justice in economic problems. The time is no more when diplomatists are free to re-draw the map of the empires on the corner of the table. If you are to re-make the map of the world, it is in the name of the peoples, and on condition that you shall faithfully interpret their thoughts and respect the right of nations, small and great, to dispose of themselves, provided that they observe the rights, equally sacred, of ethical and religious minorities.

There was, surely, some bitterness in these observations. France had not obtained what in the opinion of Marshal Foch and of M. Poincaré (whose capital contribution to the negotiations was his ignored letter of April 19th) she should have obtained. M. Clemenceau sat impassive at the head of the table, his grey-gloved hands outspread. These grey gloves seemed to become a symbol. They were noticed by everybody. Everybody wondered why the old Prime Minister should always keep his hands covered. Nobody for many years has ever seen them bare. M. Clemenceau laughingly gave me the explanation when I spent a morning with him in his house in the

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Rue Franklin. "There is in the Bible," he said, "the story of a man who had a withered hand, because his fathers had sinned. What have my fathers done," he cried, holding up his hands, "since I have two withered hands?" For better or for worse, those withered hands remoulded the world.

Both M. Poincaré and Marshal Foch had one dominant idea, that if France was to be secure, the western frontier of Germany should be the right bank of the Rhine. The left bank was regarded as a pledge to France, a pledge of payment and of peace. M. Poincaré wrote a long, carefully argued Note on this subject, and he managed to have it read in the Supreme Council. Marshal Foch, however, developed the military arguments. His memorandum of January 10, 1919, should now be recalled. In it he declared emphatically that in future the Rhine should be the western military frontier of the German peoples. Germany should be deprived of all right to manœuvre, to build garrisons, or depots; that is to say, of all territorial sovereignty on the left bank of the Rhine. Thus she would be deprived of any facility for invading rapidly Belgium and Luxembourg, and rushing to the North Sea, where she might menace England. The left bank was described as an indispensable guarantee for the maintenance of peace: first, on account of the material and moral situation of Germany; second, on account of her numerical superiority over the democratic countries of Western Europe. It was protested that there was no intention of annexing the left bank of the Rhine to augment the territory of France or of Belgium, but merely to make the Rhine a barrier which should be supervised by a democratic League of Nations. It was not proposed to make one Power the guardian of that common

barrier, but to assure by the co-operation, either moral or material, of all the democratic Powers the defence of their existence and of their future in prohibiting once for all Germany from carrying the war and her spirit of domination beyond the river.

In fixing the statute of the population on the left bank of the Rhine, the Allies should (1) totally prohibit to Germany all military access and all political propaganda in the Rhineland provinces, and perhaps even cover these provinces by a neutral zone on the right bank; (2) assure the military occupation of the Rhineland countries on the left bank by Allied forces; (3) guarantee to the Rhineland provinces on the left bank all necessary outlets for their economic activity in associating them with other western states by a common customs régime. In these conditions, it was added, and in conformity with the principle admitted by everybody of the liberty of peoples, one can conceive the constitution on the left bank of the Rhine of new autonomous states administering themselves under the reservations enumerated, a constitution which, with the aid of a natural solid frontier, the Rhine, will alone be capable of assuring peace to Western Europe.

When one considers the subsequent policy of M. Poincaré, it will be well to turn to those documents, for in them are to be found the ideas which, thwarted in 1919, have not been destroyed. M. Poincaré was concerned not so much about reparations as about security, and one cannot forget this fact when one considers his seizure of the Ruhr. M. Clemenceau decided at first to maintain these conclusions, and M. Tardieu was given the duty of preparing a memorandum which he afterwards published in his book, *La Paix*.

During the war, it is now known that various proposals were made for the detachment of the

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Rhineland provinces from Germany. Even M. Briand, in a confidential letter to M. Paul Cambon, raised the question, and while expressing some fear that the retaking by France of the Rhineland provinces, which certain Frenchmen regarded as the lost heritage of the French Revolution, would provoke accusations of imperialism, he nevertheless urged that Germany should have no military control beyond the Rhine. Mr. Lloyd George was naturally greatly opposed to any such project. "We must not create a new Alsace Lorraine in Europe!" he cried.

The triple pact that was offered by Mr. Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George, but which was not ratified by America, and was therefore dropped by England, was suggested in exchange for the abandonment of the proposal of the independence of the Rhineland provinces. The French, while insisting on a temporary occupation, accepted the pact as a supplementary guarantee of peace, and they felt themselves to be cheated when the pact fell through. The occupation of the left bank of the Rhine was eventually limited to fifteen years. The Allies would evacuate zone after zone every five years. Thus we are faced this year, 1924, with the question of the evacuation of the first section. But M. Poincaré has declared that evacuation is dependent upon the faithful execution by Germany of her Treaty obligations. As Germany has not faithfully executed her Treaty obligations, it follows that the period of occupation has not yet begun to count. This is, indeed, the thesis of M. Tardieu, who claims that under the clauses of the Treaty it will be possible to occupy the Rhineland in perpetuity. In the first place, it may and probably will be found that Germany will never fulfil her Treaty obligations. But even in the event of Germany acquitting her obligations, it is



held that, according to the terms of the Treaty, France has a right to evacuate Rhineland only if she judges that she holds sufficient guarantees against an unprovoked German aggression. There is no doubt that advantage will be taken if possible of the wording of the Treaty to maintain the Rhineland under some kind of French—in default of Allied—control. But the solution by no means satisfied eminent French personages, and the discussion between the French themselves was and has since been exceedingly bitter.

In the circumstances, it would be well to consider very seriously the plan of General Spears, M.P. General Spears is a Liberal in politics, and while taking in general the orthodox British view of the Franco-German situation, he is led by his special knowledge of France to make a proposal which in his opinion is at once equitable and effective, and should satisfy both France and Germany, and, it may be added, England.

England, apparently, would merely demand the evacuation of Rhineland on the specified dates, whatever may be the circumstances and whatever may be the sentiments of Germany, who would thus recover a jumping-off ground for a fresh invasion and a war of revenge. France, on the contrary, as one may express the matter broadly, would remain solidly encamped in Rhineland for generations, and her recent policy has been to encourage the eventual separation and independence of the Rhineland, bringing these provinces under French influence, under French control, and, without actual annexation, Frenchifying them.

Now there is a middle course, and it is this which General Spears advocates. He recognises the justice of many of the French contentions, but he is opposed to many of the French pretensions. He would have

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the Rhineland permanently neutralised. No German soldiers and no French soldiers, as such, should be allowed in Rhineland, but forces which would belong to the League of Nations, and which might include soldiers and officers of all nations, should patrol Rhineland, not in large numbers, but in sufficient numbers to guarantee the peace. Supposing that Germany were one day to become aggressive, it is obvious that she could soon sweep away the nominal forces of the League of Nations. But these forces could nevertheless at the worst hold up a German advance for a sufficient time to allow the French, and not only the French, to prepare their resistance outside their own territory.

But would Germany attack in these conditions ? He believes not, because she would attack, not France, but the soldiers of many nations. A multitude of flags would be engaged in the maintenance of the peace. This would, indeed, be a surer promise of the intervention of England, of Italy, of Spain, and other so-called neutral countries, than would the most solemn military pact which might be signed by France and a number of other Powers. The League of Nations, that is to say, the nations composing the League, might remain indifferent in spite of the covenant if their flags were not engaged, but they could hardly remain indifferent if their contingents in Rhineland were molested. This, if I understand it aright, is the scheme of General Spears, which may hereafter offer a real solution of the exceedingly difficult problem of French security, which lies very close to the heart of M. Poincaré.

Whether for good or for evil, the Treaty, which M. Poincaré was afterwards to advocate so ardently, was concluded in many respects against his judgment. He was overborne by M. Clemenceau. In this duel he was worsted. At Versailles, in the Palais des

Glaces, I saw the Peace signed on the spot on which Germany dictated the Peace of 1871. The world generally thought this was the end. It was only the beginning. It was a peace imposed upon Germany by force, and as I wrote at the time, the venerable Château of Versailles surely teaches us that there is no safety and no permanence in mere military victory.

William I, King of Prussia, was saluted there with the unanimous consent of the German States as the German Emperor only fifty years before. He must have imagined that the victory over France was final. He did not foresee that where the Hohenzollerns laid the foundation stones of their house, that house would be demolished in half a century. Bismarck, in wresting Alsace Lorraine from France, could hardly have envisaged the day when his country, humiliated and helpless, would sign away its possessions in the historic town of Versailles. The whirligig of time brings its revenges and its reversals. The whole town of Versailles is haunted by memories of the past, a past that was built upon the shifting sands of might, and not upon the rock of right.

One is bound to ask whether France, too, did not make the same mistake as Germany made. In so far as she counts upon her military victory in which she was assisted by the Allies, in so far as she counts upon the enforcement of her will by military might, is she not counting upon a method in which there is no safety and no permanence? Time will show whether M. Poincaré has reasoned wrongly.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WRITER

IT was M. Millerand, not M. Clemenceau, who founded and led the *Bloc National* to victory at the general elections in 1919. Clemenceau's star was waning, and when at the beginning of 1920 M. Poincaré, having completed the term of his office as President, the Senators and Deputies again went to Versailles to elect the new President, it was not, contrary to expectations, the man who had served France in her hour of need who was chosen as President, but M. Deschanel. M. Clemenceau did not, in fact, present himself as a candidate at Versailles, but this was for the simple reason that in the preliminary *pointage* he was hopelessly beaten. The truth is that the French Parliament feared M. Clemenceau as a successor to M. Poincaré. It believed that with all his fine qualities, he had become despotic, and many of his actions during the last months of power were certainly arbitrary. There were two men who were perhaps particularly responsible for the non-success of Clemenceau. One was M. Briand, who is even more dangerous in the lobbies than at the tribune. The other was M. Poincaré, who, while not actively opposing M. Clemenceau, had sufficiently made it known that in his opinion the Treaty was thoroughly bad and deprived France of the satisfaction of her vital needs. How far was M. Poincaré influenced by the commandeering manner of Clemenceau by which he had been subjected to

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humiliation after humiliation? History turns upon these little personal things much more than is generally admitted, even now, when statesmen live in the public eye and their petty prejudices and foibles can be seen by all the world. It is probable that Clemenceau would have made a bad President. He would have had little regard to traditions and customs. Even at the Elysée he would have continued to be the *enfant terrible*. But the old man was greatly affected by his downfall. He told me afterwards that his ambition had been to occupy the highest post for a little while and then retire. "I am an old man," he said frankly, but without any note of pathos, "and I could not continue in public life. I go to bed early and I am up very early. The morning is the time in which I can work. Obviously, I could not continue a parliamentary life. But the duties of the Elysée I could have fulfilled for perhaps a year, and I would then gladly have gone into obscurity. But I had my enemies, and they deprived me of this final joy." M. Clemenceau spoke without bitterness. He had served his country too long to have any illusions.

The popular idol in France is thrown down more suddenly than anywhere else. But, indeed, the Deputies and the Senators began to murmur against the Treaty. "The bad workman always complains of his tools," said Clemenceau. "The Treaty is not something fixed and final which settles the affairs of Europe for ever. It is an instrument to be used, and on the manner in which it is used depends its value." M. Poincaré's views about the Treaty as an inadequate instrument were rapidly spreading, and M. Briand a little later was to speak of it as the "mare of Roland." But the Treaty was the only charter that France had, and M. Poincaré, in spite of his previous attitude towards it, began to argue

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that they must stick to the Treaty as it stood. There could be no question of revision, for revision in the changing conditions of international life meant a revision against French interests. He clamoured for the Treaty, the whole Treaty, and nothing but the Treaty. His legal mind began to discover how it could be turned to advantage, and he quickly became by far the most powerful exponent of the Treaty. For M. Poincaré when he left the Elysée was not content to disappear from the stage. Unlike his predecessors, he plunged into active politics again. There was, however, a transition period. It seemed too extraordinary a thing for the President of the Republic to enter the arena as an ordinary politician, and so at first a post was found for him which it was thought would place him above the fray. He was appointed on February 23, 1920, immediately after resigning the Presidency, as French delegate to the Reparation Commission. There seemed here to be scope for his energy. It was the Reparation Commission which was empowered by the Treaty to apply Part VIII of its provisions. The Commission had sovereign prerogatives. It was, in theory at least, independent of the Governments. Here was an opportunity for a man with the prestige of M. Poincaré to do good work, since M. Poincaré, far from being satisfied with seven years of power at the Elysée, seven of the most important years in the modern history of France, felt that he had been repressed. He wanted his liberty, not to sit aloft and aloof for the rest of his life. He wanted his liberty to return to 1912, when he wielded effective power. Therefore, his appointment as delegate to the Reparation Commission did not entirely please him. He realised that in the conditions that then prevailed, with the Allied Governments continually meeting in conference and taking the control out of

the hands of the Reparation Commission, that he occupied a position which was ornamental rather than active. The Hôtel Astoria was another Elysée for him. He had been pushed aside ; he had been placed where he could do no harm. This was not what he desired. He desired his revenge for those long years of repression. Still comparatively young, still interested in the governance of France, he quickly broke out of the new prison in which he had been put.

The Reparation Commission has had a chequered history. There have been times when it has really exercised its power, but for the most part it has, contrary to the Treaty which seemed to intend that a reparation settlement should be effected on judicial lines by an international body which was uninfluenced by politics, been relegated to the second plan and subordinated to the Governments, swayed by public opinion, and arriving at arbitrary conclusions based upon no definite principles.

In 1920 the Reparation Commission, which had hardly begun to work, was at its lowest point, and the expression "sovereign body" was a mere mockery. It will be readily understood, therefore, why M. Poincaré was not long satisfied with a quiet post in which he was expected to do nothing except to obey the orders of the various Governments, and it was on May 19, 1920, after a stay of less than three months, that he shook the dust of the Hôtel Astoria from off his feet, after protesting that the course adopted by the Governments in their conferences—at Hythe and at San Remo—would lead to unjustifiable modifications of the powers of the Commission. The transition period was then exceedingly short. M. Poincaré became once more a free-lance politician. His hat was in the ring.

The position at this time in its essentials was as follows. M. Deschanel, installed at the Elysée, found

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himself unable, as M. Poincaré had found himself unable, to influence the French Government. Nominally the head of the State, he was in reality a mere empty orator at harmless banquets. Already he was feeling exhausted. He had striven all his life towards the goal which he had now reached. He found the fruit he had long desired turning to ashes in his mouth. But he did not spare himself. He fulfilled function after function day after day. He refused no invitation; he went everywhere. The strain was enormous, and added to this strain was the chagrin which he experienced at his helplessness. It was about this period that he confided to me that he was tired out and hardly knew how to multiply himself as was expected. Usually he had in his pockets three or four speeches which had to be delivered, and I remember that on one occasion in this eternal round of visits he began to read the wrong address, and not until he had referred to a number of persons who were not present did he realise his mistake. Thereupon he plunged his hand in the other pocket of his frock-coat, brought out the right speech and began over again. This overwork quickly undermined his health, and M. Deschanel, one of the most lovable men it has been my privilege to know, lost his reason. France was shocked to learn that he had fallen out of the train in which he was proceeding to a provincial ceremony, and thereafter the succession to the Presidency was open.

It was obvious that, unless something went wrong, M. Millerand would be his successor. M. Millerand at this time was the Prime Minister. After his defeat, M. Clemenceau, the veteran statesman, retired to his tent. Millerand made a number of mistakes, and, above all, was hardly quick enough to compete with the agile Mr. Lloyd George, who was already endeavouring to undo some of the worst



effects of the Versailles Treaty. M. Millerand was, in the opinion of Poincaré, giving away the expectations of France. There was a constant diminution of these expectations. It was in these circumstances that M. Poincaré entered the lists. There ensued a Millerand-Poincaré duel. At that time M. Poincaré, although elected to the Senate, did not choose to speak: he preferred to write. The new recruit to journalism became perhaps the most powerful journalist that France has ever had. His output was tremendous. Twice a month he wrote a long political article reviewing events of the past few weeks in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the leading serious French magazine. He wrote a weekly article in the *Matin*, which ran to two or three columns. The *Matin* may be regarded as the leading popular newspaper in France, although its circulation by no means equals that of the *Petit Parisien*. It is a fact worth noting that the somewhat ponderous articles of M. Poincaré on an abstruse subject which exceedingly few people can understand should have occupied the principal columns of such a journal as the *Matin*. It is, I think, a proof that the French take politics seriously, that they love to keep themselves informed. One can discuss the most difficult subjects with the concierge, with the average man in the café, in France, with profit. France, in this respect, compares more than favourably with England.

Naturally, apart from the quality of M. Poincaré's work, which was always high, his prestige as the ex-President lent the weight of exceptional authority to whatever he chose to write. In addition to these activities, he wrote regularly long articles on the same political subject in the *Temps*. The *Temps* is the most serious newspaper of France. It has long been regarded as a semi-official organ, or, as M. Herriot wittily remarked, "the evening edition of

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the *Journal Officiel*." Thus M. Poincaré had a great pulpit. He reached not only the Deputies and Senators, the Ministers and diplomatists, he reached the great public. From this moment it may be said that whoever was Prime Minister of France, it was M. Poincaré who was in power.

When he denounced an agreement into which M. Millerand had entered, that agreement was dead. Thus at Boulogne, Mr. Lloyd George and M. Millerand had practically agreed that Germany's debt should be 269 milliard gold marks, to be paid in instalments of from three to seven milliards over a period of forty-two years. This was much less than France had been led to expect, and after M. Poincaré's articles, nothing more was heard of it. It is amazing to reflect upon the preposterous sums that were then in men's minds. At one moment the claim of France was 400 milliard gold marks, or a sum running into thirteen figures altogether. How could such astronomical figures ever have been entertained? But nothing in those days was enough for M. Poincaré. It is perhaps not to be remembered against him as a reproach that his ideas of economics appeared to be of the haziest kind. When in the following year Germany was considered to have paid 12 milliard gold marks less than she had undertaken to pay, Frenchmen, including M. Poincaré, sincerely thought that there was some method by which such a staggering sum could be transferred across the frontiers of one country to another. We have learnt much since then. But so new, so unprecedented, was the problem, that not more than a dozen people in the world had any real conception of what reparations on such a scale meant. At any rate, the duel between M. Poincaré and M. Millerand took another form, though it did not end when, M. Deschanel's malady progressing, it was decided to elevate M.

Millerand to the Elysée. The prize nearly escaped him, for he had committed several errors. He had, for example, initiated the system of military sanctions against Germany when he marched to Frankfurt without previous consultation with the British Government. "With or without the Allies" had begun to be a favourite expression. But at that time the war was still too near to us to allow of such tactics, and on the strongest representations from Great Britain, M. Millerand was obliged to withdraw his troops. At Spa, it is true, Mr. Lloyd George had threatened to march into the Ruhr if Germany did not disarm, and if coal was not forthcoming for the Allies. But Mr. Lloyd George has since declared that these British threats were bluff—an unfortunate confession, which has done much to embitter French feeling.

M. Millerand's Russian policy was also unfortunate. He recognised the Russian adventurer, Wrangel, just before the Wrangel expedition against the Soviets collapsed ignominiously. But he saved himself by sending French officers to take command of the Polish army when Warsaw was about to fall to the Russian armies. And it was precisely this triumph which carried him to the Presidency shoulder high.

There followed as Prime Minister M. Leygues. M. Leygues was the nominee of M. Millerand, who, like most Presidents at the beginning of their career, imagined that he could remain the real director of French affairs, and could act through his own carefully chosen nominees. M. Leygues is an amiable and an able man, but it was generally recognised that he was a mere stopgap, and he was accepted by Parliament for a few months only as the representative of M. Millerand. Such a situation could not long endure. M. Leygues was quickly overthrown. Here,

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surely, was the opportunity for M. Poincaré, who was more and more resolved to become Prime Minister. But the relations between M. Millerand and M. Poincaré were for obvious reasons not of the best. It was M. Briand who then took his chance. As I have already pointed out, it might have been better for France and for the world had M. Poincaré taken office at this moment, and had M. Briand reserved himself for a later occasion when the Poincaré experiment had been tried and found wanting. M. Briand was compelled during 1921 to proceed cautiously, and even to lean to the Right. He became at first even more Nationalist than the Nationalists. Had he not produced the impression of a man of the Left who had been, so far as reparations were concerned, converted to the views of the Right, he would not have lasted long. There was M. Poincaré continuing an indefatigable campaign in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in the *Temps*, and in the *Matin*. There was M. Poincaré watching every step, denouncing every sign of premature reconciliation with Germany, preventing any attempt at compromise ; and the position of M. Briand, even though protected by M. Millerand, was precarious. There were further attempts to diminish the credits of the Allies, and in the Paris Conference of this year the amount to be paid was reduced to 226 milliard gold marks in annuities ranging from two to six milliards over a period of forty-two years. By May 1st of this year the Reparation Commission, which was the properly authorised body to pronounce, was to present its bill. Its bill was considerably less than had been anticipated in any quarter in France, and was received with indignation. It was already too high, but it is upon the figures thus furnished that the discussion subsequently turned. It was agreed to accept 132 milliard gold marks, and in point of fact the effective



bill was one of only 50 milliards. This requires explanation. The method of payment which was adopted was that of Germany issuing bonds which were to be redeemed. The first series of bonds amounted to 12 milliard; the second series to 38 milliard. Provision was made for interest and amortisation. But on the later 80 milliards no date of issue and no interest was fixed. They were to come after Series A. and Series B. had been paid. It was at once apparent to those who had begun to learn something of the finances of reparations that the Series C. bonds were mere waste paper. The highest figure at which I have heard their present value put is that of 15 milliards. Here a point arises which has not yet, so far as I know, been made. It is exceedingly doubtful whether the whole arrangement of May 1921 is valid. The Treaty declares that the German debt shall be paid in a period of thirty years, and the modalities of payment must be arranged to fall within that period. Now even the payment of the A. and B. bonds exceeds that period, while the C. bonds presumably have no chance of being effectively issued until the A. and B. bonds have been fully met. It may be questioned, therefore, whether the Allies have not acted illegally, and whether the whole of the schedule of payments of 1921 is not *ultra vires*.

But much more important at this time was the step which was taken by M. Briand with the support of the British Government. Since Germany had not fulfilled her obligations, it was decided that the Allies should initiate the method of territorial sanctions. It was decided to occupy the German towns of Dusseldorf, Duisbourg and Ruhrort. This decision, in which the British Government concurred, was the beginning of the occupation of the Ruhr. Once in these towns, the French never withdrew. It was

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not, therefore, M. Poincaré but M. Briand who initiated the policy of pledges, who initiated the policy of territorial occupation. M. Poincaré at this period was pressing for the whole occupation of the Ruhr. Doubtless M. Briand and Mr. Lloyd George intended to dish the Poincaré policy by carrying it out partially, and it may have been supposed that when M. Briand called up Class '19 of French soldiers and revealed the unpopularity of such measures—for there was an outcry against the calling up of this Class, and many contingents of the young soldiers were singing the “Internationale” as their train passed through the French and German towns—that he would render impossible any extension of these operations. Unfortunately, a precedent was set, a precedent of which M. Poincaré afterwards availed himself. On the one hand there was an increasing call for the revision of the Treaty, and on the other hand there was an increasing opposition by M. Poincaré to any further concessions. I remember that Mr. Lloyd George repeated to me and to others, “It is not the size of the cake that matters so much, it is the way in which it is to be cut up.” There was a growing feeling in France that England had cut off too large a slice of the cake.

Since I wish to deal only with events that particularly concern M. Poincaré, I do not propose to go deeply into the dispute about Upper Silesia, which arose under the Briand Ministry. The French and the British took different views. The French, who had an alliance with Poland and were reckoning upon Polish support, desired Poland to have, if not the whole, at any rate the larger part of Upper Silesia; whereas the British, who had become more friendly towards Germany, considered it just that Germany should retain the greater portion of this province. The matter was finally settled, largely

to the satisfaction of the French and the Poles, by plebiscite and reference to the League of Nations.

Nor do I propose to deal with the Washington Conference, at which, in the opinion of most Frenchmen, the diplomacy of M. Briand sustained a bitter defeat.

The journalistic assiduity of M. Poincaré was soon to obtain its reward. His literary style is admirable. He writes clearly, though rather coldly. His facility is extraordinary. His practice is to write in his own minute hand the long articles and the state documents which he turns out with such industry. Even his most insignificant letters he writes himself, and he usually keeps a copy which he has also written himself. I have myself received from him utterly insignificant notes and statements in this cramped handwriting. Apparently he is old-fashioned enough not to care about secretarial assistance, if it is possible to avoid it. He is his own secretary, and such aids as the typewriter and the stenographer he disdains. Those who assisted him in the more mechanical work of drawing up state documents tell me that he often reads a severe lecture to those who have misplaced a comma or whose choice of a word is not as judicious as he could have wished. Inaccuracy of any kind is his *bête noire*. It may truly be said that M. Poincaré wrote himself into power.

## CHAPTER X

### THE "FRIEND OF THE ROYALISTS"

FRANCE does not understand golf. That fact is extremely important. There were many reasons for the downfall of M. Briand in the first month of 1922. But the chief reason was that France does not understand golf. In the newspapers there were the most extraordinary accounts of his match with Mr. Lloyd George. It appeared that M. Briand was making good progress, that he was beginning to "catch the ball on the rebound," that he could "put the ball into the same hole three times to Mr. Lloyd George's four." This kind of unconsciously humorous stuff appeared in some of the Paris journals, and the effect produced by this fooling was that M. Briand was not a serious person. The French are a witty people. They joke almost as freely as the British, but they will not mix up pleasure and business. They will not take their work gaily. It is utterly untrue that the British take their pleasures sadly, but it is perfectly true that the French are inclined to sadness about serious things. The game of golf was, of course, the last drop which made the cup overflow.

There had been many attempts to reduce the payments of Germany, and at the Conference at Cannes an arrangement was practically reached by which Germany should pay during the year that was opening the comparatively small amount of 750 million gold marks. The state of German



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finances was already causing alarm, and I believe that Sir John Bradbury considered that the compromise proposed by Herr Rathenau was beyond Germany's real capacity. But, contrary to the general impression, Germany has at times promised more than she could perform, not out of bad faith, but out of a natural inclination to believe in her own resources. It was, it will be remembered, Herr Rathenau who at Wiesbaden drew up with M. Loucheur, one of the most promising statesmen in France, the famous accords by which the system of payments in kind was to be developed. These accords were to prove to be a dead letter, and it is extremely regrettable, for of all the methods of payments that are open to Germany that of payment in kind is undoubtedly the one which is most deserving of encouragement. The idea was by no means new. When I was at Spa in the summer of 1920, the German representatives assured me with apparent sincerity—and I believe them—that they were prepared to rebuild the ruined North, to supply both the necessary material and the necessary man power. They realised that, while the invaded regions remained a running sore, there could be no peace between France and Germany. They realised that the ravaged districts were a constant reproach to them in the eyes of the world. The destroyed mines, the uncultivable soil, the shattered factories, the demolished dwelling-houses, lay stark under the heavens, a witness to the destructiveness of Germany. What they felt was, that whatever other reparations should or should not be made, whatever other reparations they were or were not capable of, it was not only their duty but it would be good business to build up the devastated North and East of France. They had a scheme all ready which they explained to me,

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but it was then too early to bring it seriously to the notice of the French. They would have none of it. They still counted upon many milliards of money. In the following year, however, M. Poincaré had himself expressed to me the opinion that in certain conditions and with the strictest safeguards German man power might be employed in the red zone and German material brought into France. It was freely stated that the French industrialists, the entrepreneurs, and even the inhabitants of the North, were altogether opposed to this new German invasion. The entrepreneurs and the industrialists were doubtless thinking of their own profits, but the sentiments of the population then living in the most primitive fashion were surely exaggerated. "Better a German roof over our heads than no roof at all," said certain sections of these unfortunate people, who had returned to their villages of which no trace remained, with that strange homing instinct which drives us all back sooner or later to the place where we were born and bred.

It has always been held that the French claims for the devastated North were exaggerated. This is undoubtedly true. Every insurance company knows that demands for compensation are usually inflated. The people of the ravaged regions naturally asked for what they thought they could get. The mischievous assertion that Germany would pay induced a laxity in the examination of their claims, with the result that at the beginning of 1924 the Poincaré Government acknowledged that the statements of claims admitted in January 1922, amounting to 100 milliard francs, should in fact be reduced to 80 milliards, and powers were sought to revise the earlier decisions.

Where old factories with an insignificant output

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had existed, well-equipped, up-to-date factories with an enormous output sprang into being. The industrial reconstruction of France generally made her one of the most powerful nations in Europe, and some part of this improvement went by the name of reparation. But it was cash which was always preferred, for obvious reasons; and it was the French Government which paid, expecting to recover its advances from Germany.

Had France entered resolutely on the path traced by Herr Rathenau and M. Loucheur, and subsequently elaborated in a pact between M. Lubersac and Herr Stinnes, the reparation problem would never have become so acute. Herr Rathenau and M. Loucheur, the chief adviser of M. Briand, were still attempting to reach a reasonable settlement by mutual consent. But in the background were those who were afraid that France was being robbed of the promised reparations. The articles of M. Poincaré had sunk deeply into men's minds.

Another potent factor was the menace to the Belgian priority. Already there was the suggestion that France, sticking literally to the promises of reparations, was becoming isolated. Now, if there is one country upon which France relies, it is Belgium. Were Belgium to desert France, all would indeed be lost. The French Parliament is, therefore, particularly susceptible to any criticism which comes from Belgium. The fear of losing Belgium had much to do with the collapse of the Cannes Conference. But perhaps, above all, did France resent the sort of military pact between England and France, which was then put forward by Mr. Lloyd George. The objections to this pact were threefold.

First, it was unilateral, that is to say, that England was to come to the assistance of France in the

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case of an unprovoked aggression on her territory ; but France was not asked to go to the assistance of England. The point may not appear to be of much importance, but the *amour propre* of Frenchmen was involved. They did not like to think of themselves as dependent upon England. Their status would become similar to that of the Belgians before the war. They would exist only by virtue of the guarantee of a greater Power.

In the second place, there were no precise military stipulations, without which the pact might prove to be useless. Thirdly, the proposed pact was for a period of ten years, and it is after ten years that the French think the danger of a new attack will become pressing. These were the chief objections. But there was another of a more general kind. The French were suspicious of bargaining. They supposed that the pact was a mere bribe offered in order to make acceptable a further reduction of their expectations on Germany.

The golfing British Prime Minister, happy in the hope that some progress was at last being made, was ill-informed of the agitation in Paris, an agitation which had its centre around M. Poincaré. M. Briand appears to have been equally ignorant. In short, Cannes forgot Paris. There was an irresistible protest against sleight-of-hand methods in diplomacy. M. Briand was regarded as a Prime Minister who was being deceived into further concessions. The French were once more the victim of a stage-managed meeting. M. Poincaré was proclaiming the necessity of holding to the Treaty signed and sealed by Germany and by England, and now in effect repudiated by Germany and by England without adequate compensation for France, who had relied upon its provisions and whose financial position would become precarious were its provisions



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not fulfilled. Why should France always get the worst of the deal, it was asked. Was not her prestige suffering, was she not being dragged once more in the wake of British policy, were not her statesmen humiliated? They had perpetually to decide whether they should sacrifice the Entente by refusing to accept the British proposals or whether they should risk defeat in Parliament by accepting. These conferences had become for the French painful exercises in the art of saving their face. The whole interest of Cannes lay at Paris. I hastened to Paris and found Parliament seething with indignation, while Cannes was calm. The thunderbolt fell. M. Briand was called back by a Presidential telegram to explain why he was sacrificing French interests between two games of golf.

When M. Millerand, the President, sent his message to M. Briand, the Prime Minister was obviously lost. He had performed his miracles of equilibrium for a whole year, and that is long enough for the most skilful funambulist. In the Chamber on his return he made a long speech justifying his policy. To all who knew M. Briand, it was clear that he had not made up his mind precisely what to say, that he was as he spoke searching for indications of the feeling of the Deputies. That is his method. He is a great orator who improvises, who obtains his successes by an instinctive and sympathetic appreciation of the reactions of his audience. As he proceeded, it became plain that no matter how skilfully he could use the violoncello of his voice, the mind of Parliament was made up. There was no adverse vote against him. Suddenly he realised that it was useless to proceed, and from the tribune of the Chamber he announced his intention of going to the Elysée to resign.

The third outstanding act in the political career of

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M. Poincaré was, as has been stated, his acceptance of the post of Prime Minister. There was a reconciliation between him and M. Millerand. He set to work to form his Cabinet. It was not without some difficulty that it was constituted. M. Tardieu, who was invited to collaborate with M. Poincaré, declined. He believed that his own day would come fairly quickly, and he decided to wait. Since then he has been a thorn in the side of M. Poincaré, always urging him to still more vigorous action, always criticising him for his supposed feebleness. M. Barthou was asked to take office, and accepted. But M. Barthou is a dangerous man, according to his reputation, whether he is inside or outside the Government, and fearing to be tripped up by him, M. Poincaré, after the abortive Genoa Conference, to which he sent M. Barthou, who ran the risk of smashing himself against Mr. Lloyd George's policy of immediate recognition for Russia and of a general settlement of European problems, appointed him to the highly paid and responsible position of delegate to the Reparations Commission, a position in which he would be out of harm's way. M. Maunoury was made Minister of the Interior. This was a curious choice, since M. Maunoury was undoubtedly a man of the Left, and M. Poincaré thus showed his desire to capture the support of the Left. "In France," as an eminent Frenchman once remarked to me, "all Governments fall, whatever may be the ostensible reason, on the question of Prefects." The Prefects, in fact, are the governors of the various Départements. They have considerable political power. It is believed, rightly or wrongly, that they have some influence on the elections. That their appointment should be in the hands of a man of the Left was, therefore, a bitter pill for the Right. But, on the other hand,

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M. Poincaré chose such men of the Right as M. Maginot as War Minister—a man who is inordinately tall, was wounded in the war, and is understood to have friendly relations with the Royalists; M. de Lasteyrie was made Minister of Finance, and his chief aim apparently has been to avoid imposing additional taxation on the French people; M. Léon Bérard was made Minister of Education and of Fine Arts—another representative of the Right, who was to restore Latin and Greek to their old place in the French school curriculum; M. Chéron was appointed Minister of Agriculture—a good-humoured and cunning Norman, whose policy has favoured the country-side at the expense of the town, and has brought some conflict between the peasant and the citizen. Later, the problem of "*La vie chère*" was to become one of the chief difficulties with which M. Poincaré was faced, and as one may best understand the feelings of a people by its jokes, it should be recorded that "*La vie chère*" was currently spoken of as "*La vie Chéron*." M. Le Trocquer continued as Minister of Public Works, where he was afterwards to have chief responsibility for the administration of the Ruhr and Rhineland railways and the transport of Ruhr coal to France.

Of the others it is only necessary to add that M. Colrat belongs by his sympathies to the Right, and M. Sarraut, the Minister of Colonies, who had participated in the Washington Conference, who is a sort of protégé of M. Millerand, has leanings to the Left.

At first the Poincaré Cabinet in its treatment of the main question before the country did not appear to differ materially from that of M. Briand. For a whole year M. Poincaré postponed action. He was content with a negative policy. He perpetually said NO to England. He refused to be

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drawn into conferences. He could not avoid the Genoa Conference, where Mr. Lloyd George hoped to reconstruct the world; but he sent M. Barthou with strict instructions to refer everything to Paris. The telephone carried the word No innumerable times to Genoa, and there was nothing done.

Without following chronological order, this is a convenient place to deal with M. Poincaré's relations with the Royalists, about which wild assertions have been made. The Royalists from the beginning welcomed the new Prime Minister and openly described him as their man. This statement is by no means true, but there was much in the conduct of affairs during two years which indicated that the Royalists and the reactionaries were in fact ruling the country. M. Poincaré is undoubtedly a good Republican, with even a leaning towards the Left, but he had a friendly feeling for M. Daudet, and took care not to offend him. Who are the Royalists? They are a handful of men who ostensibly work for the restoration of Philippe, Duke of Orléans, who lives in exile in England, to the throne of France. The Duke of Orléans does not seem to take any active part in their propaganda, and contents himself with sending very occasionally a message to his supporters. The chief of the Royalists is undoubtedly M. Léon Daudet, the son of that delicate writer, Alphonse Daudet. M. Daudet is himself a powerful writer. He has a truculent style. In the series of books which constitute his memoirs, he has produced a work that, in spite of his extravagances in the Rabelaisian manner, is, in my opinion, destined to live. In it are some of the most vivid portraits, or perhaps we should say caricatures, of notable Frenchmen that I have ever read. Almost without exception, however, he flays his compatriots. His descriptions of them are excruciatingly comic.



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M. Daudet was elected to the last Parliament, owing to the operation of the curious arbitrary method of list voting, by a minority vote. He sits in his place in the House and flings out insults. He provokes applause and cries of indignation. He enjoys himself like a noisy schoolboy. It was his gaiety, his high spirits, that, by the law of contrasts, appealed to M. Poincaré, who is neither gay nor high spirited. In his newspaper, *L'Action Française*, he is constantly building up the most fanciful stories of treason. His articles would be a joy to read were one not conscious that these unrestrained assaults on the probity of men, on the honour of women—for he does not spare women—these pitiless exposures of the private lives of eminent Frenchmen and the absurd accusations which he launches with such gusto, must be terribly painful for the victims. His object, in short, as I conceive it, is first to amuse himself, mainly by taking advantage of the fact that there is no libel law as we know it in England, and secondly, seriously to discredit good Republicans. His lieutenant is M. Charles Maurras. M. Maurras is a philosophical writer of considerable parts. He was, indeed, put forward as a candidate for the Académie Française, and would probably have been admitted had not the scandal of his incitements to physical violence in the columns of *L'Action Française* become too glaring. For M. Maurras does not shrink from recommending his partisans to waylay such statesmen as M. Briand with sticks and assault them unmercifully for their supposed treachery. There is an organisation connected with the *Action Française* which is known as the Camelots du Roi. This organisation is composed of young Royalist hooligans. During the past two years they have attacked

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public men in the streets. They have wrecked Republican newspaper offices. They have administered castor oil in imitation of the Fascists. They set sixty to one upon M. Caillaux. They broke up meetings. Generally, they behaved themselves in the most deplorable fashion, egged on by M. Daudet's romantic inventions and M. Maurras's pseudo-philosophy of violence. The Socialists hold them responsible for the shooting of Jaurès. Most of the prosecutions during the war and after the war—those of Caillaux, Malvy, Almereyda, Ernest Judet, Paul Meunier, and so forth—were instigated by them. Most of their assertions were totally unfounded or were based upon the smallest modicum of truth. An Anarchist girl, Germaine Berton, deliberately shot in the office of the *Action Française* M. Plateau, the leader of the Camelots du Roi, and the Paris jury, which had become disgusted with the Royalist tactics, acquitted her.

But the worst remains to be said of the Royalists. The young son of M. Daudet was found shot in a taxicab. There seemed to be no doubt that he had committed suicide, and it was subsequently shown that he had revolted against the teachings of the Royalists, and by a reaction which will be easily comprehensible to psychologists, had become an Anarchist wishing to strike a blow against the reactionaries. It is even suggested that he intended to kill his father or M. Poincaré, and that he was curiously attracted by Germaine Berton, who was then in prison awaiting her trial. It is unnecessary to examine the truth of this or that detail of this great Shakespearcan drama. Out of a feeling of compassion, which is to the honour of the French and the foreign Press, the journalists spontaneously resolved to write nothing of the terrible tragedy.

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But the *Libertaire*, the organ of the Anarchists, revealed something of the truth. The father, who should have remained silent, since he had accepted the theory of suicide, which was supported by a number of doctors, thereupon himself began to exploit the death of his son in the columns of the *Action Française*. Day after day, for months, he launched the most incredible charges against the police, against the Anarchists, against the Socialists, against the Radicals, and against the Republicans. It is only necessary, I think, to set out these facts to make any disproof of the charge that M. Poincaré is the tool of the Royalists utterly superfluous. He did not want to provoke their slanderous opposition in the critical days, for their slanders stick. His "friendship with the Royalists" was in part due to his desire to subordinate everything to the Ruhr. One is compelled, however, in a study of the events of the past few years to refer to a dastardly story which has been whispered everywhere. The explanation of the supposed weakness of M. Poincaré in face of the Royalists, which has gained a certain credence, is that he was blackmailed by them. He was not blackmailed for money. But there were dark hints that, because of a certain knowledge which the Royalists possess of his private life, he was terrorised into pursuing their policy and in showing them the utmost leniency. There is a skeleton in every cupboard, and it is declared that the hold of the terrorists on M. Poincaré was due to their threat that they would expose a secret affecting his domestic affairs. Nothing seems to me to be more absurd. There is no secret. There is no menace. M. Poincaré's life has been public and clean. It was, however, to these circumstances that the Communist Deputy, M. Berthon, an advocate, alluded one day

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in the Chamber of Deputies. M. Poincaré sprang to his feet and cried, palpitating with indignation, "You are an abominable scoundrel!"

Nobody has ventured to utter aloud the whispers which have been circulated. The whole business should be dismissed with scorn. The truth about M. Poincaré's relations with the Royalists is quite simple. He has endeavoured to rely upon all sections of the Chamber. He has tolerated not only Royalists but Communists, as far as possible, and until they actually broke the law. When they broke the law, both the Royalists and Communists have been proceeded against in the ordinary courts of justice. The fiction which has been assiduously woven should now be torn once and for all. M. Poincaré considered himself to be pursuing a national policy and tried to remain above parties. Probably he was wrong in this. He should have chosen his supporters and have been content with smaller majorities. He should have excluded from his majorities the extremists on both sides. He chose to behave otherwise and to placate his own enemies and the enemies of the Republic, whether revolutionary or reactionary. That M. Poincaré, who has held the highest post in the Republic, is a sincere Republican, no one who has come in contact with him can for a moment doubt. That he has made any material concessions to the extreme Right certainly cannot be shown. It is the extreme Right which, for its own purposes, has always pretended that M. Poincaré is its man, and has always pretended that it enjoys exceptional favour from him. This is a lie that he should have scotched, but he liked Daudet personally, and saw no reason why he should make himself the target of a ferocious campaign. His natural courtesy, too, contributed to make him too tolerant. In *Ceux qui Nous Mènent*,  
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a French writer points out that M. Poincaré is so sound a Republican, and is so sure that France will remain Republican, that he has never shrunk from contact with royal personages, even when they belong to the so-called *Maison de France*.

For my part, whatever views I may hold about the effect of the policy of M. Poincaré, I shall be glad if I have disposed finally, first of the malicious fable that M. Poincaré has anything to fear from exposure, and second, that he has in any serious way compromised himself with the audacious band which calls itself Royalist in France.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PRIME MINISTER

OF the making of plans there was no end. Of the writing of articles and of documents, of the uttering of speeches and the issuing of declarations, 1922 and 1923 probably hold the record. It would be wearisome and without value to enumerate the various steps which were taken. The public was intensely interested in the subject at the time, and in turning over the files of the past two years, I find that my own contribution to the theme must have amounted to a million words ! A million wasted words ; a thousand suggestions thrown away ! Explanations had to be eternally repeated, and policy, British as well as French, marched unchecked in the wrong direction.

M. Poincaré at first proceeded cautiously. He stood chiefly for no more conferences. He had denounced the long series of conferences which had only succeeded in complicating the problem, and he was probably afraid that he himself would yield to the blandishments of Mr. Lloyd George were he to consent to meet him. He stood up, therefore, a rigid, lonely figure, impenetrable even to his friends. The French Parliament, so far from supposing that the advent of M. Poincaré meant an immediate march into the Ruhr, seemed now to take it for granted that an expedition of this kind was impossible. Talk of the Ruhr was deprecated. M. Poincaré appeared to wish to escape

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from his own menaces. So far from working up during the first year of office to a projected occupation, he dissipated all expectations by his purely negative attitude. He would not meet Mr. Lloyd George, and that seemed to be the sum total of his policy. Attention was distracted from the Reparation problem for some time by M. Poincaré's action in the case of the Banque Industrielle de Chine.

M. Philippe Berthelot, the Director of the Quai d'Orsay, a permanent official who had immense power, was ruthlessly broken by M. Poincaré, who thus demonstrated that he was implacable towards those who were even suspected of lack of probity. The unfortunate bank was directed by M. André Berthelot, a prominent Senator, brother of the Berthelot at the Quai d'Orsay. When it smashed and thus inflicted a considerable blow on French prestige in the Far East, it was revealed that efforts had been made to save it by telegrams despatched from the Quai d'Orsay, which had not been approved by the Prime Minister, who was then M. Briand, although M. Briand gallantly covered, as the phrase goes, M. Berthelot. M. Poincaré at a special diplomatic tribunal, over which he presided, practically dismissed M. Berthelot from the service. His horror of nepotism has always been intense, and it is recorded that in the earlier days when he was in office, his brother Lucien temporarily gave up his official work in order that there should be no suspicion that he was being aided in his career.

In July M. Parmentier was sent to the United States with a view to obtaining some settlement of the French debt to America. He was altogether unsuccessful. The Communists in the Chamber were particularly ferocious in their attacks on the Prime Minister. They endeavoured to fasten upon him the epithet "*Poincaré-la guerre.*" There was

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generally a revision in men's minds of the responsibility for the conflict. It was no longer universally accepted that Germany and her Allies were alone to blame. The part that Russia played in provoking the war was emphasised, and M. Poincaré himself was declared by the Communists to be involved. The displacement of M. Louis at St. Petersburg was especially reproached against him, and there were whispers of a far more sinister understanding between France and Russia than had been acknowledged.

German propaganda was obviously interested in shaking the whole blame off German shoulders, for the entire theory of reparations reposed upon the assumption that Germany had deliberately made unprovoked war on France. If this could be shown to be false, then undoubtedly the very bases of reparations disappear. There would be no more reason why Germany should pay France than why France should pay Germany, except the accidental reason of the victory.

M. Poincaré decided to deal with the accusations against him seriously. He delivered a number of lectures outside the House and in the Chamber. He took advantage of an incident to challenge his Communist adversaries to a debate. He had visited, with the American Ambassador, Mr. Herrick, a war cemetery. A snapshot was taken of the two men walking among the tombs. They appeared to be smiling. As M. Poincaré explained, this was the effect of the sun in their eyes. The explanation appears to be unnecessary, for there does not seem to be any reason why one should not smile even in a graveyard. But the Communists printed hundreds of thousands of copies of the photograph and distributed it broadcast. They depicted M. Poincaré, not as sadly smiling with



Mr. Herrick at some common memory, but as obtaining some ghoulisn satisfaction among the dead. It was a monstrous publication, which, rightly or wrongly, M. Poincaré did not allow to pass unnoticed. Therefore, in the hot summer days in the Chamber, he proceeded to exculpate himself from the charges brought against him. The Communists' case, as presented by M. Vaillant Courturier, was astonishingly thin. M. Viviani interposed. His speech, the first he had made in the new Chamber to Members who, although having heard of his eloquence, had never before come under its spell, had an electric effect. Never have I heard him speak with such vehemence, such substance and such perfect delivery. It was the finest piece of oratory that had been heard since M. Clemenceau made his famous speech, "Je fais la guerre." The Chamber rose almost unanimously. M. Poincaré, giving way to his emotion, left his seat, advanced to M. Viviani, and in full sight of the cheering Chamber kissed him.

It became clear, however, that M. Poincaré, although he had disposed of the charges made against him, was bound, unless he was to earn a reputation as a war-monger, to steer away from the Ruhr, was compelled to find some method of settling the protracted dispute between France and Germany. Just as M. Briand, who was suspected of weakness, found himself obliged to take strong action and to occupy Dusseldorf, so M. Poincaré, who was regarded as intransigent, was obliged to lean to the Left and to show himself eminently reasonable. It was because of this that he consented to the formation of the Bankers Committee, which was presided over by Mr. J. P. Morgan. There was, indeed, some hope that the Bankers Committee would be able to recommend loans

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which would commercialise in some sense the German debt. The German mark was already descending the slippery slope, although no one at that time foresaw that it would sink to zero. But if M. Poincaré was for a moment conciliatory, he, nevertheless, made it clear that the Bankers Committee could not change the schedule of payments, could not further reduce French credits, and could not even inquire into what had already been determined. In disgust, realising that a loan was impossible, Mr. Morgan gave up the task. The effort came to naught.

There followed Germany's demand for a moratorium and a long discussion relative to the cancellation of inter-Allied debts. Many British friends of France believed that England would be doing not only a generous thing but a sensible thing in foregoing her credits on the Continental countries. It was felt that what prevented a more reasonable attitude on the part of France was the fear that her Allies would ask her to pay, although she had not been paid. But the British Treasury took an entirely different view, and in spite of powerful protests, the fatal Note signed by the Earl of Balfour, which put cancellation out of the question, was issued. Lord Balfour pointed out that the war debts, exclusive of interest, due to Great Britain at that time amounted in the aggregate to about £3,400,000,000, of which Germany owed £1,450,000,000, Russia £650,000,000, and the Allies £1,300,000,000. On the other hand, Great Britain owed the United States about a quarter of this sum, say, £850,000,000, at par of exchange, together with interest accrued since 1919. While the British Government had abstained from making any demand upon her Allies, either for the payment of interest or the repayment of capital, it could not continue to

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take that course. The Government was prepared, if the policy of sacrifices formed part of a satisfactory international settlement, to remit all the debts due to Great Britain by her Allies in respect of loans, or by Germany in respect of reparations.

Unfortunately, the American Government, with the most perfect courtesy and in the exercise of its undoubted rights, required England to pay the interest accrued since 1919 on the Anglo-American debt, to convert it from an unfunded to a funded debt, and to repay it by a sinking fund in twenty-five years. Lord Balfour did not complain of this. He recognised the British obligations. But they could not treat the repayment of the Anglo-American loan as if it were an isolated incident in which only the United States and Great Britain had any concern. It was but one of a connected series of transactions in which England appeared sometimes as debtor, sometimes as creditor, and if British obligations as a debtor were to be enforced, British rights as a creditor could not be left wholly in abeyance. Although there was owing to Great Britain more than she owed, and if all inter-Allied war debts were paid, the British Treasury would on balance be a large gainer by the transaction, the Government nevertheless deplored the situation which had arisen. Lord Balfour went on to express the distaste with which the Government adopted the policy of requiring payment by the Allies, and indeed he exposed the arguments against such a policy. But, on the other hand, he urged that it was not right that one partner in the common enterprise should recover all that it had lent, and that another, while recovering nothing, should be required to pay all that it had borrowed. (This argument, it should be said incidentally, was subsequently used by France, who had recovered nothing, against

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England, who required her to pay what she had borrowed.) He pointed out the unparalleled burden of taxation which had been imposed upon the British people.

The conclusion was that the French Government was requested to make arrangements for dealing to the best of its ability with Anglo-French loans, although the amount of interest and repayment for which England asked depended not so much on what France and other Allies owed to Great Britain as on what Great Britain has to pay America. In other words, England would be content to surrender her share of German reparations and to write off Allied indebtedness to England, only to such an extent as would leave England with sufficient forthcoming from the Continent to pay America. "In no circumstances," he wrote, "did we propose to ask more from our debtors than was necessary to pay to our creditors. But while we do not ask for more, we can hardly be content with less."

Now, this Note was disastrous. It was a closely reasoned document, and it would have had in other circumstances much to commend it. But M. Poincaré's policy was not only directed to obtaining from Germany whatever she could pay, but was directed to obtaining from England an adjustment of inter-Allied debts. If England were to press France, who was receiving no payments from Germany, France was compelled to revert to the worst form of pressure upon Germany. The Balfour Note was one of the chief determining factors in the occupation of the Ruhr.

It would surely have been better, whatever may have been the attitude of America at this time, for Great Britain to set the example. My information points conclusively to this: that had Mr. Baldwin not in the same year hastened to America



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and concluded a settlement which places an enormous burden upon Great Britain, had Great Britain argued that, while she was willing to acquit her obligations, she would like to make the settlement part of a general settlement, it would not have been impossible to obtain some delay. But British financial policy, rightly or wrongly, was directed towards the appreciation of the pound sterling. Everything was sacrificed to keep up British credit. The folly of the separate British arrangement with America which Mr. Baldwin precipitately effected is, I think, apparent.

In the first place, England has saddled herself with a burden which in reality she may find it hard to bear, and the subsequent confession will be worse than it would have been in 1922. In the second place, those friends of Europe in America who were, against great odds, striving to present to the American mind the arguments for a more reasonable sentiment, were discouraged and finally defeated. They would have won in the end had they been allowed to continue their efforts to enlighten the American public as to the consequences of the transference of such great amounts from one country to another. Thirdly, the British were obliged to press the French, with disastrous results to the Entente, which is, after all, the corner-stone of peace and prosperity in Europe. Again, the French in their turn were obliged to become more and more antagonistic towards Germany, and thus methods of coercion became inevitable. Further, it is obvious that America could hardly give better terms to France than she had given to Great Britain. She could not release France, since she had not released Great Britain. Thus the premature settlement tied the hands of the United States Government.

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The putting into practice of the Balfour Note was, however, to come a little later. M. Poincaré was shaken out of his resolution not to meet the British Ministers by the Balfour Note. A conference was hastily arranged in London. M. Poincaré pointed out to Mr. Lloyd George in this August Council that the whole situation had been transformed by two facts which were in opposition, namely, the demand by Germany for a complete moratorium and the demand by England in the Balfour Note for the payment of the Anglo-French debt.

It was then that he formulated, though still somewhat tentatively, his theory of productive guarantees for the Allies if a moratorium was to be granted. The Ruhr was already looming ahead. Mr. Lloyd George made a strong plea for the proposed moratorium, but to no purpose. M. Poincaré by this time had actually reduced French claims to 26 milliard gold marks; that is to say 52 per cent. of the A. and B. bonds. He was content that the C. bonds, amounting to 80 milliards, and thus constituting the greater part of the German indemnity, should be set aside and cancelled as the inter-Allied debts were cancelled. His policy was conciliatory and constructive, but it was rendered impossible by the flat rejection in the Balfour Note of any such arrangement. It was clear that the two countries having taken up these positions would, in spite of the most earnest endeavour, fail to agree in the London Conference. M. Poincaré stuck to his demand for productive pledges, and Mr. Lloyd George agreed only to a certain supervision of the German Customs by the Committee of Guarantees, a supervision of the German Budget by the Reparation Commission, and an exceedingly modified form of exploitation of German forests and mines. What really wrecked the Conference was the Balfour Note,

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and it is impossible to insist too strongly upon the consequences of this regrettable document.

On his return to Paris M. Poincaré made a powerful protest. He recalled the series of disappointments, the concessions which France had been asked to make in favour of Germany. It had gradually appeared to France that she was denied the right to have a French policy, but an alliance could only be lasting if there were equality and mutual respect for national sovereignty. French wishes had constantly been subordinated to the wishes of others. The British Government had failed to grasp the gravity of the French financial situation and the paramount interest of France in being rapidly indemnified by Germany. It appeared to forget the formidable advances which had been made by the French Government for the repair of the North.

When Germany formulated her fresh demands for a moratorium, the British Government, without consulting France, publicly declared that the German wish should be granted, and at the same time (went on M. Poincaré) England in a Note reminded France that she was a debtor country. We were greatly surprised that a kind of eventual demand should be thus addressed to us at the very moment when Germany was announcing that she would not pay and when England was supporting Germany's demand. The coincidence was, to say the least, regrettable. If England required to be immediately paid for what France had purchased from her during the war, and if at the same time she deferred the payment of reparations, she would reduce France to the necessity of turning to those of her Allies who were her debtors, and thus France would be invited to recover from Italy, Rumania, and Serbia the sums demanded which she was not allowed to recover from Germany. I need not say that we could not allow ourselves to be placed in such a strange position. We are not dreaming of calling upon our Allies to pay at this moment. We want to recover our bill against Germany first. Until we do, it is morally and physically impossible for us to discharge our debt to our British friends, and they will understand that we on our side do not wish to dun our common friends.

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It will be seen that M. Poincaré was bitter. He felt keenly the position in which he had been placed. He felt that he was driven against his will to forcible action, which in his heart he wished to avoid.

In the following month, October, Sir John Bradbury brought forward a scheme which had considerable merits, but it was vitiated by this threat of making France, not Germany, pay. He suggested that Germany should for a few years give Five-year Treasury Bonds, as she had given Six-months' Bonds to Belgium. The German Budget would thus be relieved for a time of the Treaty charges. At the same time there should be fixed the exchange value of the mark by an arrangement under which the Reichsbank would sell gold for paper marks at a fixed price to be determined by a mixed commission. The Reparation Commission should be transferred to Berlin.

The feeling in France, however, was growing very bad. The visit of the Reparation Commission to Germany was without permanent effect. The mark continued to fall.

In November the Government of Mr. Bonar Law succeeded the Government of Mr. Lloyd George, and for a moment there flashed up a new hope. There was projected a new London Conference to consider the possibility of a moratorium for Germany. But by this time the policy of the Ruhr had been cautiously but unmistakably elaborated in France. Before Dr. Cuno's demand for a moratorium could be met, France must have pledged. M. Poincaré on December 15th declared that there was no question of a military expedition nor of sanctions of a punitive character. France merely wished to take certain measures in collaboration with her Allies, measures which consisted in the installation at certain points of her engineers, of

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her Customs officers. It was a grave decision which had at this time already been practically taken, that if England would not help, France, disappointed and disillusioned, would in the last resort act alone. The December conversations in London proved to be inconclusive, but a new Conference in Paris was fixed for January. The President of the French Republic, M. Millerand, was understood to be urging strong sanctions. The memory of Frankfort persisted. Something like a political crisis was occurring in France, and M. Poincaré was being pushed along the perilous path that he feared to tread.

As if to prepare the way for the taking of sanctions, the Reparation Commission on December 26th declared Germany to be in default in her deliveries in timber. The Italian, the French, and the Belgian delegates all agreed that this failure in execution constituted a default by Germany in the performance of her operations within the meaning of Paragraph 17, Annexe 2 of Part VIII of the Treaty. The legal case for sanctions was being established, and it was afterwards to be strengthened by a declaration of Germany's default in respect of coal, and, indeed, generally. The January Conference was to open in the most adverse conditions.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE DIPLOMATIST

SOMEDAY somebody will write a book about the effect of sickness on the destiny of the world. Since the war it has been impossible to understand many events unless one realised that the two or three or four men to whom our modern world, which calls itself democratic, but which is above all anxious to discharge its responsibility upon the shoulders of those who happen to please its passing fancy, had allowed themselves the fatal luxury of illness. During the Peace Conference I remember that at the critical moment when Mr. Wilson should have fought most vigorously he suddenly lost all interest, became irritable and abandoned the fight, because he had an attack of influenza. His chief adviser, Colonel House, was at that moment suffering from gallstones. The whole bottom went out of the struggle for a clean-cut peace on Wilsonian lines. Another example: Just before M. Clemenceau was confined to his house with a bullet in his back, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George had decided that, come what may, the proposed Conference of Prinkipo, at which a settlement would be effected with Russia, should be held. They would undoubtedly have kept their resolution had they not found themselves dealing with an incapacitated man, whose incapacity had on this occasion made him stronger than ever. But one could multiply illustrations and could make any recent history

read like a pathological study. How far the course of events has been changed by the fact that Clemenceau was an old, liverish man, that Wilson was stricken down when he was endeavouring to rally America to an acceptance of the Treaty, that Lord Curzon has been perpetually troubled with phlebitis, would be an interesting speculation. But, above all, the history of the world was changed because Mr. Bonar Law went to Paris in January 1923 to confer with M. Poincaré, suffering from cancer, a sick and a dying man, who had no fight left in him.

M. Poincaré would have been glad to have avoided the occupation of the Ruhr. He would have been glad to have made a demonstration, that would not have amounted to much had England joined in. He was compelled by his own country, from M. Millerand to the man in the café, to do something. Strong action had, in view of French disappointment, become imperative. But M. Poincaré hoped that this strong action would be a gesture and nothing more, and that England, joining in, Germany would immediately surrender. Thereupon he hoped not only for a settlement with Germany, but a settlement with England on the question of inter-Allied debts. His policy was as much designed to put pressure on England as upon Germany.

Now, the offer that England made in January was not unreasonable in the circumstances, and was, indeed, generous. Unfortunately, it was put in an offensive manner and in a manner which was not easy to understand. The British plan ought to have been circulated for some little time before. It ought to have been discussed. Upon it a compromise could undoubtedly have been reached. Although the plan was open to considerable criticism from the French point of view, it

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would, I am convinced, have been accepted in substance by M. Poincaré, had the negotiations been conducted with more skill and tenacity and had the British Government been prepared in the last resort to do what they had done already at Dusseldorf, that is, to agree to a demonstration which would not have meant the occupation of the Ruhr in the sense we now understand, and which would have brought about the immediate surrender of Germany, faced not only by France but by Great Britain.

When we realise how little has been the part that principles have played in either French or British policy, when we realise that had we shown some regard to expediency we should have saved Europe a long wasted year of suffering and of upheaval, we shall see that even had British diplomacy been compelled nominally to admit a Franco-British entry into the Ruhr, it would have been infinitely better for us to have gone in with the French in order to get them out. This view, that we should have accompanied the French, first, in order to control them, and second, provoke a decisive conference, at which France could hardly have refused to quit the Ruhr, at which American influence, alarmed at the possibilities, would undoubtedly have been directed towards real solutions—was held by more than one of the professional British diplomatists with whom I discussed the situation. Just because we consider the occupation of the Ruhr to be so bad, we should never have allowed France to undertake the operation alone. The matter was put to me humorously by a British diplomatist: "If one's wife," he said, "announces that she is going to throw herself into the river, is it not the proper course to accompany her, at least to the river brink, and even, if necessary, go in with her to get her out?"

But it is doubtful whether France would not have



hesitated if the alternative course of definitely declaring England's implacable and active opposition had been taken. We simply washed our hands of it all. By temperament Mr. Bonar Law was inclined to pessimism, but troubled by his throat, hardly able to raise his voice, he gave up almost before the conference began. There was hardly any pretence at a search for a way out. Now, it is the duty of the diplomatist, as it is the duty of the general, to believe that he is going to win. If he believes he is to be defeated, he has mistaken his profession. The whole *raison d'être* of the diplomatist is to discover a compromise when there seems to be mere blank opposition. If there were no international difficulties, there would be no need of diplomatists. The greatest condemnation of the diplomatist is war: war which demonstrates unmistakably that he has failed in his primary functions. But the next greatest defeat of the diplomatist is a rupture of conversations. There was scarcely any effort on the part of the British to avoid this rupture. The case of the British was presented by Mr. Bonar Law and the case of the French was presented by M. Poincaré. They were entirely different. Thereupon the British took up their hats and caught their trains home. In saying good-bye they actually expressed the good wishes of England for the success of the operations into which they had thus forced the French.

M. Poincaré was left with no alternative but to occupy the outskirts of the Ruhr with a few engineers and a few soldiers. Germany was enheartened to resist by the separation of France and England, realising that England was morally on her side. The French, once in, were bound to extend their occupation until the life of the Ruhr, political, economic, financial and administrative, was

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utterly dislocated. The clock was put back, not for a year or two, but for a generation or two, and the ultimate consequences may be the changing of the map of Europe with new wars and new bankruptcies.

The British plan which was thus to be accepted or rejected and which was sprung upon the conference and upon the world at the last moment, dealt both with Germany's obligations and with inter-Allied debts. Except for certain deliveries in kind, Germany was to pay nothing for four years, and afterwards was to pay two milliard gold marks a year for four years. This amount was to be increased to something over three milliards for ten years. There was power to antedate the commencement of the annual payments if it was found practicable, but this certainly could not be counted upon. Germany was to issue five per cent. bonds. She was to be given inducements to raise loans and acquit her obligations by anticipation. Germany also was to undertake to stabilise the mark in accordance with recommendations contained in a report of foreign experts who had been consulted by the German Government in the previous November, and to restore budget equilibrium. She was to accept financial supervision by the Allied Powers. The principle of military occupation was certainly not rejected by the British, for in the scheme it was laid down that if Germany failed to fulfil her part of the bargain, measures might be taken by the Allies, which would include the forcible seizure of German revenues and assets, and military occupation of German territories outside the existing zone of occupation. This point is important to remember when subsequent British opposition to the principle of the occupation of the Ruhr is considered. As for inter-Allied debts, the essence of the proposal was that after a first series of German

bonds, to be received by France in respect of the Belgian war debt, and to be received by Italy in respect of her share of reparations, the balance of the net debts owing as between European Allies in respect of advances for the purpose of carrying on the war was to be entirely written off, on condition that the debtors transferred their interests in a second series of German bonds to a pool for distribution to those Powers which are indebted to the United States in proportion to their respective American debts.

The British considered that under this scheme the whole indemnity would be collected in twelve or fifteen years, and about 37 milliard gold marks actually realised. The plan was uncommonly difficult to explain clearly, and was probably understood by very few people. The French proposals laid stress on the special needs of France. It was declared that the reduction of the German debt could not be considered by the French Government unless the Allies chose to give what was in effect priority to the devastated regions. The French Government could not pay either the capital of its debt to the Allies or the interest, so long as the expenditure already incurred or to be incurred by France for the reconstitution of the devastated regions had not been covered by German payments. The French, believing that Germany was deliberately reducing the value of the mark, was inviting bankruptcy, was refraining from taxing her people, was permitting capital to escape to foreign countries, demanded an immediate submission by Germany of a plan of financial reform. The Committee of Guarantees was to be transferred to Berlin. A moratorium should be granted only on condition that some effort to meet part of the German liability should be made, and that the necessary productive

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pledges should be seized. This moratorium should be for two years. The French Government expressed the opinion that the application of a programme of pledges would not necessitate any movements of troops in territories which were not then occupied. It was rather a method of control in the Ruhr than a military operation which was contemplated. Should, however, the German Government fail to take the measures demanded, such default would bring automatically into operation the following sanctions: (1) Military occupation of the districts of Essen and Bochum; (2) the establishment of a Customs cordon to the east of the occupied territories.

It appeared to me, and still appears, that although very different terms were used, the two plans were not altogether irreconcilable, although it is true that the finality at which the British aimed would not have been reached. The criticism of M. Poincaré was that, although the French had endeavoured to eliminate from the pledges military occupation of the Ruhr, Customs barriers in the Ruhr, and other features objectionable to the British, in return the British suggested no pledges, no taxes, and little reparation in kind. It was pointed out that according to the complicated calculations which were made, England would receive from Germany and from her Allies about 17 milliard marks, while France would receive only  $19\frac{1}{2}$  milliard. The British plan attacked Belgian priority and also Italian gold deposits held by England. The great French point, however, was that inter-Allied debts should come after the payment to the Allies by Germany, and should not be mixed up with such payments in a manner that would reduce the payments to France. Mr. Bonar Law stated the British case with great moderation and ability, but his general conclusion was that it was no good patching



up some other plan which might be unworkable. He believed the French plan would make the recovery of German credit impossible. Any Allied control of the coal-fields of the Ruhr would be particularly dangerous for German credit, since the Ruhr was the jugular vein of German trade.

One point in the British proposals particularly irritated the French. It was the supersession of the Reparation Commission by a foreign council of finance which might be controlled by the casting vote of the German Minister of Finance. Into details, however, it is superfluous to go. The Conference broke down. Assurances of cordial friendship, in spite of the diametrical opposition of views, were given. The breakdown was called, perhaps foolishly, the "rupture cordiale." While the British would not share any responsibility for French action, they did not raise the question of the legality of that action, they did not declare that they would oppose such action by every means in their power. The French thereupon, having heard the Germans in the Reparation Commission on the question of shortage in the deliveries of coal, declared, in spite of the dissent of Sir John Bradbury, that Germany was in wilful default. This vote was taken on January 9th. The next day the French Government issued a notification to the German Government that it had decided to send into the Ruhr a Mission of Control composed of engineers endowed with the necessary powers to supervise the working of the coal syndicate and to ensure by means of orders given by its President, either to the syndicate or to the German transport service, the strict application of the programme fixed by the Reparation Commission, and to take all measures necessary for the payment of reparations.

The political character of the Mission was em-

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phasised. The only troops were those which were required to safeguard the Mission. No disturbances and no changes would be introduced into the normal life of the population, which would be able to continue working in order and quietness. It was pointed out to the German Government that it was in its interest to facilitate the work of the Mission. In the event of hindrances, coercive steps would be taken.

On January 11th the French operations began. The Germans had removed their industrial headquarters from Essen. They endeavoured to thwart the French in every possible way. "Passive resistance," as it was called, was adopted. The result was what might have been foreseen. The whole of the Ruhr was quickly occupied. The French forces were increased, military occupation was an undisguised fact. German officials were expelled; the Ruhr was cut off from the rest of Germany by a Customs cordon; there was a general cessation of work; transport was rendered impossible for some time, and the French and the Belgians who actively participated in the operations—the Italians having nominally sent two engineers into the Ruhr and no soldiers—took over the administration of the whole of the Rhineland and Ruhr railways, forming a *régie* which they proposed afterwards to convert into an international *régie*.

The long struggle had begun. Henceforth it was a contest between passive resistance and French reorganisation. That it was impossible to dig coal with bayonets soon became apparent; that soldiers and engineers could not carry off such coal as lay at the pit mouth on their backs was quickly seen. Moreover, the food problem soon became acute. The French could not escape the responsibility of feeding the population. The military men were not altogether easy, for they realised that the troops

at their disposal, which in almost any circumstances could hardly have been increased beyond 100,000 men, might be swept away by any general uprising. Severe measures were taken against sabotage, and death sentences were freely passed. French railwaymen were imported in large numbers. Gradually the railways were put into working order, and gradually the deliveries of coal to France were increased. The occupation, however, was obviously a failure, but once in, it became impossible for France to confess defeat by a withdrawal. Now and again there was bloodshed, but, on the whole, the population remained calm, and the conduct of the French soldiers was quite as good as might have been expected.

Had the Germans surrendered in the first few months, they would have spared their country much suffering. Their surrender in the end was inevitable, and any advice to resist or encouragement of any kind, coming from no matter what quarter, inside or outside Germany, was undoubtedly bad, since it prolonged a hopeless situation which could have only one end.

With a man like M. Poincaré at the head of the French Government, a man who, like all timorous men, would show the most iron resolution when once he had committed himself, France would wait patiently at any cost for a complete capitulation. Whenever there is question of national pride, of prestige, the French, who have wrongly acquired the reputation of being changeable, are the most determined people in the world. Not until the autumn was the German surrender to come, and when it came, M. Poincaré missed the great chance of proclaiming his victory and of forcing a settlement. But there was to be much diplomatic strife before that surrender came.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE LAWYER

THE dominating fact about the French occupation of the Ruhr is the British condemnation of it as illegal. Whatever happens, whatever arrangements may be ultimately made by the French alone, will be vitiated at the root by this British contention. If the French were wrong to go into the Ruhr, and if a considerable part of world opinion recognises their occupancy of the Ruhr as wrong, then everything which springs out of that occupancy will be unstable. Indeed, it does not much matter whether the British argument is right or wrong ; the making of the British argument remains, influencing men's minds, silently working and sapping the attempts at constructive work. Just as the Germans were beaten in the Great War because they were believed to be the authors of the war, so will the French sooner or later be beaten in the Ruhr struggle, whatever immediate settlement may come out of it, because their action is considered by England, by Germany, by a considerable part of American opinion, and by a considerable part of world opinion, as illegal.

I cannot doubt that the French have much moral justification for their action. They have that moral justification in the recalcitrancy of Germany, who set out deliberately to make herself bankrupt rather than pay ; in the desertion of France by the United States and by England ; in the general exasperation



caused by the financial situation of France which was attributed to the non-fulfilment of her expectations, encouraged by other countries, on Germany.

It has been my business to show that French action can on the whole be more than excused, but there still stands up, stark and implacable, the British veto on the ground of illegality. That is a decisive central fact that may influence the course of events on the Continent for generations. This point, although it was in the minds of the British Government on January 1923, was not raised until Mr. Baldwin came into power after the resignation, on the advice of his doctors, of Mr. Bonar Law. Mr. Baldwin's advent aroused much interest. It was thought that the antagonism which had developed between France and England could now be forgotten. With a clean start, Mr. Baldwin could remake the Entente. He was, except for his unfortunate settlement with America, a comparatively new and unknown man. There was even a chance that he would start his career with a new French Prime Minister in office, for, by a curious coincidence, M. Poincaré within a week had fallen. He fell, however, only for a few hours. He had received a rebuff in the Senate. The circumstances were as follows: M. Marcel Cachin, the leader of the Communists in the Chamber of Deputies, had been arrested with some of his companions in January on his return from the Ruhr, where they had addressed Communist meetings and delivered other speeches in which it was alleged they had urged the workers of both Germany and France to resist French occupation. For four months he was detained in prison, in spite of the immunity which Members of Parliament enjoy in France—this immunity having been raised by a special vote of the Chamber—on the assumption that he would be sent to trial at

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the Assizes. The case against him was thin, and the Cabinet finally decided that M. Cachin and his companions should be brought before the Senate constituted as a High Court of Justice. This decision was obviously purely political. It would have been a staggering blow to M. Poincaré had the Communists, who had organised the campaign against French action in the Ruhr, been acquitted by a Paris jury. It is rarely that the Senate has been invoked as a High Court. Only on four previous occasions had it been asked to pronounce judgment—three of them being the trials of Boulanger, Caillaux and Malvy. The Senate, when the matter came before it, unexpectedly resolved that the case was not one which should have been referred to it ; they shrank from returning a purely political verdict, from suppressing the right of free speech. When the decision of the Senate was known, the Prime Minister, after consultation with his Cabinet, could do nothing else than resign. M. Millerand, dreading the crisis that would ensue, fearing the collapse of French policy, refused M. Poincaré's resignation. Great pressure was brought upon the Prime Minister to remain in office, and eventually he consented.

It is interesting to speculate on what might have occurred had M. Poincaré gone right out in May at the moment when Mr. Baldwin came in in England. It is at least probable that the Ruhr operations would have been liquidated and that a new understanding would have been reached between France and England. Mr. Baldwin, even as it was, expressed early in June his confidence that common ground would be found on which France and England could meet. He declared that he saw no reason why a settlement should not be reached. And yet M. Poincaré had made an understanding extremely

difficult when he flatly rejected the first German offer after the occupation of 30 milliard gold marks without guarantees, not in conjunction with England, but on his own hasty decision. This decision, without consultation with the Allies, although the German Note was addressed to the Allies, seemed to indicate the final shattering of the Entente. M. Poincaré indeed appeared to harden his heart at this moment. He was visibly failing, and he summoned up all his energy and courage to persuade the Belgians to lay down with the French fresh principles in June. The June principles elaborated at the Brussels Conference were undoubtedly one of the turning points of the struggle. Hitherto it would have been possible for the French to have left the Ruhr on a satisfactory settlement. I had the impression that the French would have been glad to find some valid reason for evacuation. M. Perretti della Rocca had informed me that what was wanted above all in the circumstances was a political victory. The French would almost have been glad to have taken the credit and let the cash go. Real reparations were becoming impossible. There have been varying conceptions of the aims of France. Sometimes we were told that the Ruhr occupation was designed to put pressure on Germany and to elicit an acceptable offer. We were told that nobody counted on any effective yield from the Ruhr, nor did France mean to stay in the Ruhr. But now greater insistence was being placed on the productivity of the pledges. We were told that even though the occupation was expensive, even though it had temporarily dried up the reparations in kind which had previously been received, though in smaller quantities than the French demanded from Germany, nevertheless, in the long run, when the Germans agreed to work

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again, the Ruhr would become a paying proposition. The occupation, in other words, was becoming an end in itself and not a means to an end. It was at the Brussels Conference that this conception seemed to crystallise. It was then resolved, first, that there could be no conversations with Germany until passive resistance had completely ceased ; and second, that the evacuation would be progressive in proportion with the effective payments of Germany.

As Germany was not likely to satisfy the French demands now that her currency had gone to pieces and her Budget was in a hopeless state, this declaration of Brussels was taken to mean that the French would never evacuate the Ruhr, or, at any rate, would not evacuate the Ruhr for many years. Although it was hardly recognised at the time, I consider this declaration to have been the death-blow to all hopes of an early arrangement. But further efforts were made. When another memorandum came from Dr. Cuno, the French did not reject it out of hand. There was a resumption of inter-Allied conversations. They were to last for some time. I think that the situation can be best explained by putting in one of my own memoranda drawn up towards the end of the summer.

1. M. Poincaré did not want to go into the Ruhr. It was an experiment feared and hardly thought possible after M. Briand's cry of " *Debout les Classes.* "

2. When we gave up the game in January, France was forced to play her bluff. There is no intention—or need—to criticise the tactics then employed, but it is more than doubtful whether even at that moment M. Poincaré had made up his mind.

3. Once in the Ruhr the occupation developed. There was no French opposition, the fact was accepted ; and although M. Poincaré still only thought of obtaining a speedy political victory, as time passed it became desirable to obtain something more than the easy triumph he had counted upon.

4. Exasperation, pride, a hardening of feeling, gradually



led M. Poincaré to envisage the virtual annexation of the Ruhr and to impose hard conditions. At Brussels it was decided not to evacuate the Ruhr until the last penny was paid, or to engage in conversations until Germany surrendered. The chief point was Germany's surrender: that had to be won at all costs; as for the continued occupation, it could still be interpreted in many different ways.

5. When British support was thought to be the sole cause of Germany's continued resistance, when England declined to advise Germany to capitulate, then the hardening process went further, and it became impossible for M. Poincaré to make any concessions which would not be interpreted as weakness.

6. Now we have reached a stage in which the French policy has completely crystallised. If England had spoken the word "surrender" even a month ago, France might have been content with her moral triumph. It would have been hard for us to do so, but the prize was the possible saving of Germany—and of Europe. Whatever France had done—and I do not think she would have been even then intransigent, although her mood had grown uglier with the thwarting of her wishes—the situation could not have been as bad as it is now likely to become. France is becoming resigned to the break-up of Germany if there is no other way. She has changed her purpose from (a) bluff to (b) timid realisation, with the hope of a brief demonstration leading to a solution, to (c) angry insistence on unconditional surrender, to (d) a growing desire for the smash of Germany since nothing else can be had, with France holding to the Ruhr. In other words, we have gone from a search for reparations to a demand for a political victory, and then to a search for security in the European chaos.

7. Complicating and, at the same time, helping these processes has been the French preoccupation with the British debt. It is understood that this debt is a menacing weapon which may be brandished by Britain; and the threat implied in our refusal to make things easier for France has made her savagely reckless and bitterly defiant of us. Not only has the Ruhr occupation been directed against Germany, but it has become a sort of blackmail levied against us, and as we did not pay up—that is to say, relinquish our claims on France—France is desperately playing for Germany's possible ruin.

8. The practical conclusion is the question put to oneself: is there yet time to help France to rejoice in a Pyrrhic success?

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If it could be done, there is still just a chance that France would take the credit and let the cash go—win out on “principles” and not worry about interest. I strongly advised the resumption of conversations some time ago, believing that France could hardly again venture on a rupture : these conversations might have led to better results had we humoured France on the Ruhr issue. Is it too late to humour her ?

The British, fearing that France meant to stay in the Ruhr, put a series of questions to her. M. Poincaré endeavoured to avoid a written reply. Although the British drafted a response to the German Note and France was invited to sign it jointly, the British questionnaire to France made such an agreement impossible.

At last, in August, Lord Curzon suddenly grew weary, and decided to give the British communications to the world. The quickness with which M. Poincaré acts in a diplomatic crisis was well shown. It did not take him an hour to make up his mind. Then and there he resolved to publish his own instructions to the Comte de Saint Aulaire, French Ambassador in London. He thus had the advantage of placing the French case before public opinion with a promptness that entirely discounted the British endeavour to rally public opinion against France. Lord Curzon wrote his famous long August Note, and almost by return of post he received from M. Poincaré a point by point reply which was a sheer diplomatic *tour de force*. Both Lord Curzon and M. Poincaré now seemed to be more concerned in scoring points than in arriving at results. Competent opinion, besides my own, is that, so far as scoring points is concerned, M. Poincaré won easily. And while on the merits of the matter, the British who now raised the question of legality were probably right, they had raised it far too late, at a time when it could not have the effect of causing the

French to abandon the occupation. Moreover, the British Government threatened to take further action, to oppose the French actively, to strike some resounding blow. After the reply of M. Poincaré they did nothing. Lord Curzon's menaces therefore fell flat. They became ridiculous. They placed Great Britain in the most unenviable situation. They are responsible above all for the enormous loss of prestige of the British nation on the Continent. There has been no greater fiasco in our time than the failure of the Baldwin-Curzon Government to follow up its threats.

There were two courses open to the British. The first was to come to an agreement with the French at all costs. The second was to translate their words into deeds and definitely destroy French policy. As I have already stated, I believe that in the long run the declaration of legality will have its effect, but for the moment, at any rate, Lord Curzon, by his loud words and Mr. Baldwin by his lack of action, covered British diplomacy with confusion, and brought about the belief on the Continent that in spite of boastings the British nation can be ignored. This is a lamentable result.

M. Poincaré had an easy task in showing that England had on several occasions contemplated the occupation of the Ruhr—or, at any rate, Mr. Lloyd George had said so. He pointed out that Germany had made perpetual attempts to escape from her obligations. He repeated that the French would be prepared to revert to their original intention of an invisible occupation of the Ruhr as soon as Germany ceased passive resistance and accepted the occupation. But there would be no final evacuation until the payments were made. As for inter-Allied debts, France stuck to her contention that all she asked from Germany for herself was 52 per cent. of

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the A. and B. bonds ; that is to say, 26 milliard gold marks, leaving the rest, that is to say, any part of the A. and B. bonds that should not be demanded from Germany by the other Allies, and C. bonds of 80 milliard gold marks (admittedly waste paper) for bargaining purposes between the Allies.

Should England and America insist on the payment of French debts, then France would insist on the payment by Germany of the C. bonds. He argued that the Allies had proclaimed their financial solidarity during the war, and had acknowledged the priority of claims in respect of persons and property over war costs. It is impossible even to summarise the French and the British documents, but the documents that were published officially will repay study. They contain the most complete statement both of the British and the French case.

Something must, however, be said of the question of legality. The two paragraphs of the Treaty under which the French claim to act alone in the taking of military sanction are paragraphs 17 and 18 of Annexe 2 of Part VIII of the Treaty. They read as follows :—

*Paragraph 17.* In case of default by Germany in the performance of any obligation under this part of the present Treaty, the Commission will forthwith give notice of such default to each of the said Powers, and may make such recommendations as to the action to be taken in consequence of such default as it may think necessary.

*Paragraph 18.* The measures which the Allied and Associated Powers shall have the right to take in case of voluntary default by Germany and which Germany agrees not to regard as acts of war may include economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals, and in general such other measures as the respective Governments may determine to be necessary in the circumstances.

Now, although there are defects in the wording of these paragraphs, and although the British have given their case away by associating themselves with earlier menaces, it will be seen that the French



can only justify their action by such doubtful phrases as "in general such other measures" and "the respective Governments." The French consider that the word "respective" must be read as meaning each individual Government. But this is contrary to the whole spirit of the Treaty, which provides for inter-Allied institutions and inter-Allied action. Even the first part of paragraph 18 speaks of the measures which the Allied and associated Powers shall have the right to take, and it would indeed be curious had the drafters of the Treaty, who began a sentence with a reference to the measures to be taken by the Allied and associated Powers, intended to finish the same sentence with a phrase which would give each Government the right to act alone. If the French contention is correct, then any Ally can take any step it pleases without reference to the other Allies, and the consequences might conceivably be that all the Allies would take the most contradictory steps which might mutually cancel out or might result in the division of the whole of German territory among the Allies. *Prima facie*, therefore, the onus of proof that the Allies can act separately is on France. There has never been any interpretation of these paragraphs by the Reparation Commission or any reference of these paragraphs to a judicial tribunal.

It is possible to read the expression "the respective Governments," taken in its context, as referring to the Allies as a whole who are spoken of in the previous part of the sentence, or, at any rate, as referring to the suggested measures of an individual Government which had been accepted by the other Governments concerned. But apart from this point, which relates to the right of a Government to act alone, it is necessary to consider the character of the sanctions which may be taken. In the first

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place, the Commission made no recommendation as it was empowered to do under Paragraph 17. In the second place, it is usual to read such phrases as "in general such other measures" in connection with the specific measures which those words follow. They simply cannot be made to mean anything whatsoever. In this particular case they follow the words "may include economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals." These words indicate the character of the sanctions, and must determine the character of "such other measures." The other measures cannot be, according to all reasonable reading of legal documents, altogether different in their nature from those which they are meant to complete and to round off. As nothing is said of a further occupation of territory, it is straining the Treaty beyond reason to suppose that territorial occupation is thus threatened. It would have been perfectly easy to have written "economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals and territorial occupations." That such words were not included is a strong presumption that they were not meant. Moreover, the occupation of Germany by the Allies is defined elsewhere in the Treaty. It is defined as the occupation of Rhineland. The geographical limits of this occupation are clearly stated. There is even a provision for the punishment of Germany, not by the extension in space of the occupation, but by its extension in time. Now, if the occupation is defined, it is surely confined. There is otherwise no point in the definition. For these and other reasons I am therefore unable to accept the French thesis that the occupation of the Ruhr is legal, and it is certain that any widespread belief that it is illegal must have in the future the gravest consequences. It is strange that M. Poincaré, who has essentially a legal mind, should have gone wrong on this issue.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ORATOR

BALZAC gives us a vivid picture of Rastignac contemplating Paris from an eminence, shaking his fist at the great agglomeration, and crying, "Maintenant à nous deux." During the latter part of 1923 M. Poincaré seemed to shake his fist at the whole world. But behind M. Poincaré was France. It was necessary that France should be kept interested and perpetually stirred to enthusiasm. However disappointing the direct results of the Ruhr occupation might be, however remote the indirect advantages might appear, upon M. Poincaré devolved the huge task of maintaining a solid French front and, indeed, of keeping Belgium—who was particularly restive, who had not anticipated such a protracted struggle—by his side.

We had known M. Poincaré as an orator before, but never did he pour out such oratory as now. It may be doubted if one man has ever delivered so many speeches in the same space of time as M. Poincaré. He was, whatever may be thought of his ideas, wonderful. In Parliament and out of Parliament, in season and out of season, he expounded his theme. The theme never altered, though he varied the expression. Even the most eloquent orator would have found it difficult to avoid monotony, and M. Poincaré is rather a clear speaker than a persuasive speaker. There is no striking phrase. The nearest he came to coining a ringing

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word was when he said "Pay, or we stay," and even this is far better in English than in French. No, he is not an orator of the first rank, but he is prolific and obtains his effect by dint of repetition, of tirelessness, and of a certain cool clarity. Time after time he stated and restated his case. His damnable iteration and reiteration was too much for his opponents. It was maddening. He bludgeoned them into silence. However many speeches he may have made in the Chamber during the week, he went out Sunday [after Sunday by way of recreation to pronounce a series of discourses in some devastated town or village. Usually he delivered himself before a monument to the dead. These speeches could be obtained in advance, by those who were interested for professional reasons, at the Quai d'Orsay in neat typewritten copies. But M. Poincaré had no typewritten copy nor any manuscript. Sometimes he would compose as many as seven speeches in a day. He writes quicker than any man I have known, and every word was hastily scribbled down in his nervous handwriting without an erasure. This manuscript was then typewritten, and he would usually see it no more until he was in the train on his way to the scene of his Sabbath-day performances. But he had memorised every word. It was rare indeed that he improvised a single sentence. It was rare that he added or subtracted from his written speech. He became as it were its slave. The circumstances may have changed, as indeed they did between the time of the composition of his speech and its delivery. But the speech was not changed, and often what was taken to be a reply on the Sunday to an event—a speech by a foreign statesman or a Note—of the Thursday, was in reality definitely prepared and left untouched on the previous Monday. If for



some reason in the course of speaking he decided to replace one phrase by another, he would telephone to the Quai d'Orsay that in the ninth paragraph of speech No. 4 such and such words should be replaced by his new expression. Never did he go wrong. There was a little speech of greeting at the station; there was perhaps another speech to a deputation of children; there was a speech at the *mairie*; there was the speech at the monument. He recited them all as an actor recites his stage speeches. In its way there has never been anything like it. For months M. Poincaré was as a man possessed.

✓His physical labours were appalling. The mental strain was terrific. But he seemed to revel in it all, and only rarely did he become "rattled." His voice, always thin and metallic, but carrying far, slightly disagreeable and pitched generally in the same key, became a little shriller when he was troubled and impatient. No other question but the Franco-German question—which includes the Anglo-French question, the Italo-French question, and the question of France's relations with Poland and the Little Entente—seemed to interest him. Everything else was a secondary matter. This is why such incidents as that of Chanak, where the French left the British in danger, were possible. This is why the Treaty of Lausanne—a triumph for the Turks, who reversed their defeat by the Allies in the Great War—was rendered possible. This explains M. Franklin-Bouillon and the pro-Turk policy, which reaped for France, not the gratitude of the Turks, but their scorn. There was apparently no room for other things in M. Poincaré's mind: or rather, although he attended to other things quickly as they arose, he chose always the line of least resistance, and was in a hurry to dismiss all other problems.

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M. Poincaré has his obvious limitations. He could not even see that there was a case against his policy. Perhaps the successful politician rarely can. He is nearly always dogmatic. That there are two sides of the shield seems incredible to him. M. Poincaré frankly stated his own case and only exceptionally endeavoured to refute the arguments of his opponents. Had there been a better conception on the French side of the British case, or had there been on the French side a better conception of the French case, I am persuaded that an adjustment would have been found long ago. But everybody had taken up his position and was not to be moved. There was at my dinner-table one night a prominent British authority and a well-known exponent of the French thesis. They began in complete antagonism, but as the evening wore on we discovered to our astonishment that we were all saying very much the same thing in different terms. The trouble was that we would not change our terms. The British Treasury view was that 14 milliard gold marks, the wherewithal to pay the British debt to America, had to be recovered on the Continent, and it did not matter whether it was obtained from Germany or from France. At need, the British claim might have been reduced to 10 milliards. Now, the French resented this confusion of the German and the French debt. They pointed out that the British claim meant that the less Germany paid to England, and therefore to France, the more France would have to pay to England. The French stubbornly maintained that they cared nothing for what other countries were to get. They must have, as a matter of priority, their 26 milliard gold marks from Germany. It will be seen that there was room for adjustment; that a sum scarcely exceeding 40 milliards, which Germany could have

been put in a position to pay at that time, would have satisfied all parties.

The fault did not lie altogether in the limitations of M. Poincaré, for there was a lack of understanding, and perhaps a lack of the will to understand, on both sides of the channel. Nevertheless, the limitations of M. Poincaré, his fear of allowing himself to move one inch from the ground he occupied, was chiefly to blame.

Something should be said in this connection of his opponents in France. M. Loucheur was much more subtle. He went to England in the early part of the occupation to find some way out. He believed there was a way out. The President, M. Millerand, consented to his negotiations with Mr. Bonar Law and other Ministers, and M. Poincaré was privy to them.

M. Loucheur is essentially a business man, who would have a business settlement. He has never regarded the Franco-German quarrel in its political aspect, nor even in its legal aspect. In the private Cabinet of M. Loucheur there was a little conference at which the writer was present, in which M. Loucheur, taking up pencil and paper, and making a series of calculations, demonstrated, at any rate to his own satisfaction, that a purely financial settlement was by no means difficult.

His very facility as a lightning calculator is perhaps to be regarded as a defect, for with his optimistic temperament and his lively imagination he is apt to think that when once he has worked out the sum to his own content there is nothing more to be said or even to be done. He said :

I went to discuss the methods of reparations in kind with Herr Rathenau at Wiesbaden, and we established a system which might easily have given the best results had it been properly tried. But unfortunately there were political com-

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plications. I still hold, however, that we could make good use of deliveries of materials and goods by Germany, and that by developing this method of payment we should recover an important proportion of our credits on Germany.

Even at Cannes, where I participated in the conference with Mr. Lloyd George, we seemed to be well on the way to a definite solution of our difficulties. There is no need to discuss the causes of failure, but although ostensibly Germany is now in a much worse state from the monetary point of view than at that time, there is still room for an all-round arrangement.

I was against the occupation of the Ruhr before the event and did not conceal my opposition. But when the step was taken in consequence of the undoubted bad faith of Germany, it is the unquestionable duty of all Frenchmen to support the Prime Minister. The flag of France is involved, and we cannot allow our prestige to be diminished.

He has been accused of giving too optimistic an account of his interviews with Mr. Bonar Law and with other Ministers at London, but he still maintains that there was a general accord in sight, not only with regard to reparations but on the subject of inter-Allied debts.

The plan which he adopts is to take the French claim of 26 milliard gold marks, the Belgian claim of 5 milliard marks, and to add, say, 10 milliard marks for England. There are small amounts to be added for other countries having claims on Germany, but there are also to be deducted various amounts paid by Germany. It is possible in this manner to reduce the German debt to a sum of about 40 milliard gold marks.

This, in spite of protestations to the contrary, he held to be well within the capacity of Germany, and Germany would probably have been pleased to conclude a settlement of this sort. What would happen to the American credits on France was not clear, but it was presumed that the United States would not immediately press for collection, and that



a hypothetical right maintained by France to levy new demands at some future date on Germany in the event of America demanding its dues would not seriously affect the credit of Germany or shake too seriously the prospect of a final settlement.

✓The amazing thing is that, when once we get down to figures, the differences between France and England, and even Germany, were not anything like so great as was generally supposed.

Very different from the views of M. Loucheur were those of the other rival to the succession of M. Poincaré, M. André Tardieu, in spite of the fact that they were colleagues in the same Clemenceau Cabinet. Both of them subsequently developed on divergent lines ambitions for the Premiership.

M. Tardieu disapproved of the Poincaré policy because it destroyed France's chances of reparations while pretending to be seeking reparations, because it misapplied the Treaty of Versailles while professing to hold to the letter of the Treaty, because it tended to shatter the Entente without any corresponding compensation for France, and because, in short, M. Poincaré is, in a famous phrase, a lath painted to look like iron.

M. Tardieu would not go back on the Ruhr occupation, but he would make it efficient and effective. The writer in conversation with him even found that he was prepared to take more vigorous action than the French Prime Minister for the sake of obtaining a settlement. What he complained of was that all that had been done has produced the maximum of harm with the minimum of good.

It was not long legal disputes and niggling argumentation that were required. While there was so much talking, which is perpetually assuming a more and more aggressive tone, while Germany's capacity of payment was being more and more

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reduced, while friendships were being lost and France being isolated, bit by bit there were, in fact, French concessions, until the present claims, as compared with those of M. Clemenceau, are derisive.

It is the want of direction, the habit of improvisation, of allowing French policy to follow the current of events and to suffer from those events, that M. Tardieu criticised. When M. Poincaré overthrew M. Briand, it was because France was not receiving adequate reparations. Since then France has received a great deal less. After hesitating a long time, after becoming more and more embittered with England and embittering British politicians, M. Poincaré went into the Ruhr without clear designs and without the assistance of England. Indeed, he incurred the strong disapproval of England, and yet his object was extremely vague.

Was it to exploit the Ruhr, to seize a productive pledge, or was it merely to exercise pressure on Germany? Whichever may have been the principal reason for this action, France has vacillated between the two, and has accomplished neither one purpose nor the other. On the contrary, M. Poincaré, according to M. Tardieu's view, only succeeded in stiffening German resistance and raising, in a more acute manner than ever before and in far less favourable conditions, the question of inter-Allied debts. While the prospect of receiving anything from Germany was receding, the prospect of having to pay large sums to England was advancing. And in addition there was shaping itself a new grouping of European Powers, with England opposed to France and seeking a separate arrangement with Germany, while the United States look on far less sympathetically to France than ever before.

Such is the scathing condemnation uttered by the man who more than any other helped to fashion

the Treaty of Versailles and who naturally holds that his work was good. If the application of the Treaty has been disappointing, it is because that application has been incompetent.

What has been gained? M. Tardieu's assertion is that M. Poincaré has been too passive. His activity has been altogether negligible. Instead of obtaining coal and coke in the greatest possible quantity by untiring organisation, France obtained less.

As for M. Herriot, leader of the Radical Party—who is one of the protagonists of the *Bloc des Gauches*—his attitude has been ambiguous. Had the Radical Party from the beginning opposed the occupation of the Ruhr, there is no doubt that France would sooner or later have rallied to the Radical Party. But although in the end he criticised the Poincaré policy, he would not vacate the Ruhr unless he received in exchange equally valuable pledges. Where are these pledges to be found? I had many conversations with members of the Radical Party. They ran somewhat as follows:—

*Q.* In order to make clear your differences with M. Poincaré, I will ask if you intend to take less than the 26 milliard gold marks which he regards as a minimum?

*A.* Certainly not. French needs must be met. We could not further reduce France's expectations.

*Q.* At any rate, may I take it that you would leave the Ruhr before Germany paid?

*A.* We will not leave the Ruhr until we are positively assured that there is no risk of Germany's not paying.

*Q.* Where then is the essential difference?

*A.* The difference lies in this: that while the *Bloc National* believes in national solutions, we believe in international solutions. We believe that only by a general all-round understanding can the problem of reparations be solved.

Personally, I did not find this particularly helpful. I found it vague. Although international solutions

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are certainly to be encouraged, conferences would surely be useless if the French went into them resolved to demand precisely what M. Poincaré demanded. It may, however, be granted that there would have been a different atmosphere, and that is of some importance. But M. Poincaré was by no means opposed to the Radicals, nor were the Radicals, as a party in Parliament, definitely opposed to M. Poincaré. There was notably some sympathy between M. Poincaré and M. Herriot, who said of the Prime Minister, "He is a man turned towards us."

Had it not been for the Ruhr policy M. Poincaré would have fallen long ago. He was accused of not throwing in his lot with the *Bloc National*, which comprised his chief supporters, but rather of leaning towards the *Bloc des Gauches* in domestic politics. All Prime Ministers in France become what the French call *usé*, that is to say, worn out at the end of a comparatively short period. So much has been neglected that a new start has to be made. Now M. Poincaré particularly neglected home affairs. The Budget of 1923, which was quite inadequate, was not passed until the middle of the year, and for 1924 there was, strictly speaking, no Budget at all. It was simply decided to apply the 1923 Budget to the following year. I have already pointed out that the system of two Budgets, one of which is called a Budget of Expenses Recoverable upon Germany, is merely a device for concealing heavy deficits. It could not conceal them for ever, and at the beginning of 1924 the disastrous fall of the franc, in which the world was beginning to lose confidence, compelled M. Poincaré to bring forward hasty proposals for increasing taxation, on the very eve of the elections, a course from which the Government had previously shrunk. But these

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proposals furnished his opponents with this argument :—

What ! We were told that Germany would pay, and we now find that it is the French who have to pay ! Do you then despair of receiving anything worth while from the Ruhr ? Is this an acknowledgment of the failure of your policy ? Have we been taught to rely on German payments only to discover that unless we help ourselves we will plunge headlong to bankruptcy ?

There were many other subjects on which an ordinary Government in ordinary circumstances would have fallen time after time. Whenever M. Poincaré was in difficulties he made a speech on foreign policy, and he rallied the Chamber by patriotic arguments which even the Radicals could hardly resist. They dreaded, on the approach of the elections in May 1924, the accusation of being anti-patriots. They wished to avoid the discussion on the Ruhr as far as possible. They desired to fight the elections on the financial muddle, on the fall of the franc—which diminished in value by half during the Poincaré Ministry—and on the high cost of living.

The absence of enthusiasm, of imagination, in M. Poincaré made him miss many opportunities. The strong courageous man knows when to give way, knows when to get out. But the man who is timid at heart can only hold on. I will only refer to two missed opportunities. When Mr. Baldwin came to Paris in September and had a two hours' talk with M. Poincaré, the following surprising communiqué was issued :—

It is not to be expected that in the course of one meeting M. Poincaré and Mr. Baldwin would be able to settle upon any definite solution, but they were happy to establish a common agreement of views and to discover that on no question is there any difference of purpose or divergence of principle which could impair the co-operation of the two countries on which depends the settlement and peace of the world.

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Such a communiqué immediately following on the Curzon Note of August 11 is almost incredible. It had been drawn up in advance by a permanent official, and therefore may be regarded as conventional. But although it must be discounted, it is nevertheless true that the meeting between the two men was cordial; and had M. Poincaré then and there initiated a more conciliatory policy, there is little doubt that he would have won a great diplomatic triumph, and would have brought about a reaction of sentiment in which the Entente between France and England could have been restored and a quick agreement with Germany have been reached. He was, however, far too cautious, and in the same month he committed what many Frenchmen regarded as a still greater blunder.

The Germans at last abandoned passive resistance. Here was his opportunity of carrying out his promise to return to a system of invisible occupation. Here was his opportunity of declaring that his purpose was achieved, that victory was in sight, and that he was now prepared to make every possible concession. The Quai d'Orsay had, in fact, proclaimed the great political victory, and for a day it looked as though the whole operations would be wound up. M. Poincaré happened to be at his country house at Sampigny, and perhaps because he did not realise the atmosphere of Paris, he telegraphed instructions to the Quai d'Orsay that there was to be no exaggeration, that before victory was proclaimed they should wait to see whether Germany in fact ceased resistance.

It is not in this way that triumphs are obtained. The dramatic touch is needed. A man with dramatic imagination would have declared, then and there, that the fight had ended, and would then and there have made positive proposals. Germany could not

have failed to respond. Instead, the disappointment gave a new turn to resistance, and a month later the Crown Prince returned, a symbol and a portent, from his exile to Germany. It is true that M. Poincaré, apparently alive to his error, then agreed to the constitution of committees of experts, on which American representatives were to sit, to attempt the task of saving German finances and also of discovering the means of bringing back to Germany exported capital. But was it not too late? Had not M. Poincaré, the orator, escaped from his oratory after the clock had struck twelve?

## CHAPTER XV

### THE ECONOMIST

IN considering what was the true object of the Ruhr occupation, or, at any rate, what came to be the object of the occupation, it is impossible not to refer to the small party known as the *Démocratie Nouvelle*, led by a journalist who signs "Lysis" and frankly demands the annexation of the Ruhr. The arguments which the members of the group employ are not unsound. They ridicule the belief that France can ever obtain reparations from Germany. They declare that the experience of the past five years amply demonstrates the intention of Germany to swindle the Allies, and the "will to pay" that M. Poincaré tries to implant in the German mind will result merely in new scraps of worthless paper. Germany will escape her obligations in some way or another. Reparations are a myth. But France without reparations is ruined. Therefore, as reparations are a necessity for France, and as they cannot be obtained by the methods hitherto pursued, there is nothing for it but to seize bodily and openly the Ruhr and make the best of this rich productive region. This contention is logical, but M. Poincaré has always denied that annexation in any form is a part of the design of any responsible French statesman. It may indeed be argued that if France is to keep control of the Ruhr until the last mark is paid, and if there are forced agreements with the German industrialists



of the Ruhr, something hardly to be distinguished from annexation will be the effect of French policy. But against this are the declarations that the occupation will be purely nominal, will become invisible, if and when an arrangement is reached between France and Germany.

An important fact to bear in mind is that M. Poincaré throughout 1923 discouraged rather than encouraged the overtures of the German Government, while he encouraged rather than discouraged the overtures of the German industrialists. He almost refused to recognise the Government. He allowed the local authorities, General Degoutte, the Commander-in-Chief, and M. Tirard, the High Commissioner of Rhineland, to negotiate with the Otto Wolffs, the Hugo Stinnes, the Krupps—after having sentenced Krupp, illegally it would appear, to fifteen years' imprisonment for the shooting affair at his works for which he could hardly be held responsible, and releasing him on condition that he helped the French. Much was made of the scheme that Herr Rechberg, another German industrialist, brought to Paris and submitted to M. Poincaré, under which the French industrialists would be allowed, roughly, a 25 per cent. participation in selected German enterprises, the capital value of this participation being credited to reparations account.

Again the Franco-Belgian *régie* of the Rhineland and Ruhr railways was established, though it was always protested that eventually the French wished to turn it into an international *régie*. In short, the chief talk in certain circles was of economic contracts and of commercial treaties. The French ironmasters were particularly suspected of aiming at an alliance with the German coal magnates.

Now the iron of Lorraine and the coal of the Ruhr

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are two complementary commodities. One cannot do without the other—or rather, if the Ruhr can do without Lorraine, Lorraine cannot do without the Ruhr.

The union of the iron lands and the coal lands of the two countries would be a tremendous event. France would be in the most formidable position it is possible to conceive had she control of both Lorraine and the Ruhr, in addition to her own iron and coal basins such as Briey and Longwy. Were there a Franco-German consortium which would include all the iron and coal companies of these regions, it would undoubtedly be the steel and iron king of Europe.

✓ It is easy to understand the alarm that is created in British steel circles at the idea of a junction between France and Germany for the common exploitation of their mineral resources. England was falling behind even before the war, and the Yorkshire manufacturers and the banking groups which are associated with them would certainly not be pleased should an economic accord of this character be reached.

It is certainly true that considerable efforts have throughout been made by the German magnates and the French industrialists to arrive at an understanding. There were many meetings at Paris, even in 1920. Precisely why the negotiations resulted in nothing it would not be easy to say. There are those who allege that there was some interference on the part of interested international financiers. At any rate, the fact has to be registered that the *pourparlers*, which were unofficial, which took place as between the great industrialists of France and Germany, though they had the approval of the Government, came to naught. The union which would have been so momentous in its consequences did not take place.

But that there must be common control is a notion which must inevitably grow. It is a fact that the Germans never felt quite comfortable about Lorraine. They always feared that they would some day lose Lorraine. It is for this reason that they made Lorraine dependent on the Ruhr.

For, without doubt, it is dependent. First of all, to smelt the Lorraine ore, Westphalian coke is necessary. Germany, it is true, delivered large quantities of coal under the Treaty, but the quantity was not specified. Ruhr coke, which is essential, was hard to come by. France has not sufficient to avail herself of her resources in iron ore. This, however, is almost a secondary matter. The primary fact is that the Germans, with extraordinary foresight, with a remarkable judgment of the possibilities of the future, did not build blast furnaces to any very large extent in Lorraine. They sent the ore to the Ruhr to be smelted. Thus Lorraine finds itself with great quantities of ore and no facilities for employing it to good purpose.

It is, perhaps, a paradoxical position, but it would not be exaggerating to say that the restoration of Lorraine to France, with all its natural riches, is in present circumstances almost a burden. The iron ore lies useless, and obviously will soon be piled up in such quantities that it will not be worth while to extract it.

But, it will be asked, if Lorraine has such quantities of iron that she cannot utilise, because of the lack of coke in the first place and of foundries in the second place, why does she not simply send it to other countries where blasting furnaces exist in sufficient numbers?

The reason is that the iron ore of Lorraine is of an inferior quality demanding a certain treatment, and that commercially it would hardly pay to trans-

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port it in a raw state. Clearly the weight and bulk of iron ore, especially of the Lorraine kind, is such that it is idle to think of shipping it, for example, to England.

It would, therefore, appear imperative that in some way or other the ore of Lorraine should be dealt with in the Ruhr. If the Ruhr would not deal with it voluntarily, then some methods of coercion had to be employed. There must, to use the expression of the high French official, be a forced union.

It will certainly be asked whether the Ruhr can afford to refuse to take Lorraine ore. Are not the blast furnaces of the Ruhr just as dependent on Lorraine as Lorraine is on the Ruhr? No. It seems that Germany contrived to buy and import iron from other countries, notably from Sweden and from Spain, which she worked in the Ruhr, and that this was a paying proposition.

It is no wonder, then, in these circumstances that the iron magnates of France should be interested in the control of exports and imports into the Ruhr. There simply must be some working arrangement. It is only another instance of how impossible it is for countries to be self-contained.

Obviously it would be to the interest of all parties to work in a friendly way with each other. But political considerations come in. The problem becomes exceedingly complicated. Regarding the matter dispassionately in its diplomatic aspect, without reference to morals or personal sympathies, it will be seen that France can always enjoy some advantage in her relations with England by hinting at the possibility of concluding an arrangement with Germany which would certainly be inimical to powerful British interests. Nevertheless, the temper of France is such that she finds it hard



to look at the question from a purely economic or diplomatic viewpoint. She really cherishes an intense distrust of Germany. She is really afraid of Germany's revival both in the economic and military sense. Badly as she wants reparations, greatly as it would pay her to have a commercial alliance, she is kept back by these two sentiments. She believes that if she does not do everything to keep Germany down Germany will turn upon her in a comparatively few years. In any case Germany will become commercially strong. Here is a reason for the inability of France to come to an accord, and a reason for the forcible occupation and exploitation of the Ruhr.

On the other hand, Germany is extremely bitter against France. The French believed that both in the Rhineland and in the Ruhr the ordinary German people were somewhat sympathetic toward them, and that there need be no friction. In this, on the sound authority of some of the most capable British observers, the French were entirely mistaken. The French were hated in Rhineland. They are still more hated in the Ruhr, where the patriotism of the miners and iron-workers, in spite of their tendency to Socialism, is beyond all doubt.

If it is not easy for French and German magnates to work together amicably, it will be impossible for French officials and directors to work on any terms with the German workmen. They will certainly do little under French supervision and authority. What is certain is the comparative non-productiveness of the German workmen under French rule.

In France itself many persons, mostly Socialists, recognise the economic purpose of the Poincaré policy. Before 1914 Germany was the leading coal power on the Continent, with the four great basins

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of the Moselle and Sarre, Westphalia, Upper Silesia, and Saxony. She had coal but not iron to the same degree. It is for this reason that she coveted the iron mines of Briey. To-day French metallurgists have great quantities of iron but comparatively little coal. The departments of Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin, and La Moselle, bring less coal than they consume.

The Sarre is being worked by the French, and there is to be a plebiscite in ten years hence. The industrial part of Upper Silesia was largely taken from Germany. Westphalia, in which is the mining centre of the Ruhr, produces over 90,000,000 tons of coal a year. Only Saxony remains. It is, therefore, alleged that allied exploitation of the Ruhr means the economic annihilation of Germany.

Clearly, however, French iron-founders are with the occupation of the Ruhr in an extremely strong position. Indeed, for the moment, they are in an all-powerful position, but on the other hand, Germany, whatever may be the difficulties, can in such a situation think only of revenge and the recovery of those provinces and resources taken from her and placed under foreign domination. A devastating war seems to be a certainty. In the meantime the difficulties of control are far more enormous than appear to have been thought likely in France.

It has been argued that from the British and, in so far as it affects the United States, the American point of view, it is of little consequence whether Lorraine and the Ruhr, together with the Sarre Valley, which is rich in metallurgical industries, are controlled by France or Germany or are under the divided control of the two countries. Is not Germany a country of far greater industrial capacity than France? Did not Lorraine, the Sarre and the

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Ruhr exist before the war, and were then completely under German control? Now that the two countries together endeavour to control them, will not the competition be less rather than more? But the objection appears to be that a combination of the two countries will not only lead to effective production in these districts, but that French industries which were before the war scarcely to be regarded as serious competitors will receive the assistance of the German industrialists, and the whole Franco-German metallurgical trades be brought up to a condition of efficiency previously unknown. It is an undoubted danger. The Comité des Forges in France is, as a writer in *The Times* pointed out, an organisation "which uses industry to advance national policy and uses political policy in the interest of industry. It is a power in the Press, in politics, and in finance."

Something like economic imperialism has been practised, and the French groups come into the enterprises in Lorraine, in the Sarre, and probably it will be found in the Ruhr, in the most advantageous circumstances. In short, reparations as such were not to be obtained from the Ruhr, but a gigantic extension of the control of the French ironmasters and a co-ordination of German and French industrial interests was to be foreseen.

It should also be observed that French firms such as Schneiders purchased collieries and blast furnaces in Austria, in Upper Silesia, in Poland; and the great Skoda works in Czecho-Slovakia were acquired. There are, indeed, French interests in Rumania and in Yugo-Slavia. Hungary is drawn into the ring. French firms have peacefully penetrated Russia. In some of these enterprises the Germans are already co-operating with the French. There are those who dream of absolute economic

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power on the Continent. This is only to be achieved by a Franco-German combination, and the Ruhr falls naturally into the immense scheme. At the same time the French are still somewhat concerned about German competition. They feel that Germany must be handicapped.

It will be useful to set out, not the French case as it is expounded by M. Poincaré in unchanging public speeches, but the more occult policy, which is that of influential financiers and business men. In this policy, if one were frank about it, there is to be found, it is believed, a certain appeal to British interests. As some highly placed persons, including M. François Marsal, a former Finance Minister, a big banker, and still the friend, the confidant, and the adviser of M. Millerand, see the matter, the problem is only incidentally to collect reparations, which are of course needed and will be welcome. The real object is to give France (in so far as she is not an economic ally of Germany), and it is urged Great Britain, a fair chance of competing with Germany. By various processes, such as the preposterous inflation of the mark and the refusal to tax the German people as the British and even the French people have been taxed, Germany finds herself in a position at a given moment to compete formidably with both England and France—unless France can protect herself in other ways as already indicated. There is no national debt. German enterprises have rid themselves of their pre-war obligations. Labour is cheap. Industrial equipment has been improved and can easily be set going again. In short, unless a handicap is put upon Germany, there will be in a few years a flooding of the world markets.

Now certainly France would like to obtain all the reparations which are possible from Germany, but she



would chiefly like to obtain them because Germany, in meeting this liability, either directly or by the commercialisation of the debt through loans from America and other countries, will be forced to stabilise her money and place a burden of taxation upon her people which will increase the cost of material, the cost of living, the cost of labour, and accordingly the cost of production. The countries chiefly concerned would thus start from somewhere about the same mark, and their commercial rivalry would develop in fairer conditions. Moreover, Germany would not then be able to spend any considerable sums on armaments. If, on the other hand, Germany declines to be subjected to such a handicap—which should be reconsidered in the light of experience from time to time—then France will remain in the Ruhr and in Rhineland, and the same effect will be produced, namely that Germany will not be able to flood the world markets or to become a powerful military nation. France, it is said, does not desire to crush Germany, and declines to take the responsibility for the consequences of German recalcitrancy, but she wishes the commercial possibilities to be limited in this manner.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE VISIONARY

AMONG the conversations which I have had with M. Poincaré, the one which remains most in my memory is that of a morning, some months before he became Prime Minister, in his house in the Rue Marbeau. This conversation had a particular importance because it was not sought by me. In the circumstances of the moment, indeed, I had judged it advisable to avoid an interview, but after some consultation I went. At that time I was acting as the representative of the London *Observer*. There went, also by request, my friend, William Ryall, then of the *Manchester Guardian*. Something of what was said I wrote. But the most important thing was never written. It was M. Poincaré's vision at the end of the fight for reparations and security of a Franco-German friendship.

It is no paradox, but merely a commonplace statement of an obvious truth, to say that the end of all war must be peace, and the object of all war is therefore peace. M. Poincaré wanted peace with Germany, and if he conducted the operation of the Ruhr it was to arrive at this desired state of peace. His policy as he explained it was to squeeze Germany as hard as possible, to obtain all the advantages to which he believed France was entitled, but at the proper moment to extend a fraternal hand across the frontier.

I confess that I was somewhat startled at this con-  
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ception. It would be wrong to place M. Poincaré and those few French politicians, mostly Radical, who have always adumbrated on a Franco-German alliance, in the same bag, but it is curious that by different paths they should propose to arrive at the same goal. The objections to M. Poincaré's methods are apparent. Is he not arousing an antagonism which, so far from resulting in peace, must make war inevitable? Is there not a passionate hatred of France in Germany, who has been humiliated, crushed, and made to suffer in every conceivable manner five years after the conclusion of the Armistice? How can France, having taken hold of the tail of the crocodile, ever let go?

The answer to these questions apparently is that there has been a perfectly fair and legitimate struggle. Germany's purpose has been to escape the payment of reparations, and by every device she has done so. France's purpose was to enforce such reparations as were possible, to obtain various economic advantages, and to render Germany less formidable in the commercial and the military sense. There will come a moment—M. Poincaré has no idea when that moment will come—when it will be in the interests of both parties to agree to finish the strife and to remain on the positions they have lost and won. Both sides will have won something, both sides will have lost something. If France does not adopt this policy at the proper moment, Germany will undoubtedly seek her revenge. Self-interest, therefore, counsels France to make terms with Germany, and self-interest also counsels Germany to make terms with France. A *revanche* is uncertain, and it would be better to strike a bargain. If the industrialists of the two countries, if the Governments of the two countries, at this date, near or remote, truly agree to live in amity, the

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peoples of the two countries can easily be controlled. After all, what is public opinion? Passions can be inflamed by the newspapers, if the newspapers all repeat the same sentiments without cessation. But passions can be subdued, they can even be transmuted into contrary passions, if the newspapers, which take their *mot d'ordre* from the Foreign Offices, suddenly begin to express the contrary sentiments. The sufferings, the humiliations, will soon be forgotten. It is altogether wrong to suppose that the people, the good little people, cherish enmities if they are left alone. Has not England, which was inflamed to the highest pitch against Germany during the war, already forgotten her grievances? Has not England, who was choked with emotional friendship for France during the war, already come to look upon France as a potential enemy? It is not even a matter of twenty years. It is a matter of five years to change the whole current of a nation's feelings towards another nation.

If any other example is needed, one has only to point to Russia, who almost overnight, from being our great and glorious ally, became an outcast among the nations, guilty of atrocities which even surpassed those which we had been taught Germany had committed. No sensible man can, after the constant changes in appreciation of this or that country, believe any longer that there are good and bad nations. All countries are good when they are our friends, and all countries are unspeakably bad when they are our enemies. Thus it is calculated that, in spite of all that has happened, it will by no means be impossible to turn the current at a given moment when it is in the interest of the two countries to change the current.

But, it will be further objected, what guarantee



is there of such a policy being carried out? When the time comes M. Poincaré may or may not be there to ensure the fulfilment of his designs. Is it, after all, easy to ensure that there will be rulers who will desire to retrace their steps when they have once been propelled in a certain direction? For my part, I merely raise these questions and give no dogmatic answer. What is clear, nevertheless, is that the inevitability of war between France and Germany is an utterly false doctrine. The Ruhr is not necessarily on the road to Armageddon.

The great danger, as I see it, is that the majority of politicians in France, as in other countries, do not know precisely what they are after. It may be doubted whether M. Poincaré and the Quai d'Orsay knew precisely what they were after. Did M. Poincaré encourage or did he not encourage, for example, the Separatist movement, largely artificial, in Rhineland and in the Palatinate? It is hard to say. There was undoubtedly vacillation. Intellectually the Quai d'Orsay and the most Nationalist of its supporters were opposed to the fostering of Separatist movements in Rhineland and the Palatinate. They saw all the reasons which could be urged against the attempt at the artificial break-up of Germany. Nobody has expressed them better than Pertinax, the well-known writer, in the *Echo de Paris*. Not only is France accused of imperialist designs and denounced by the whole world; not only does she supply her enemies with the most powerful material for propaganda; but she actually loses instead of gains by the encouragement of the bands of German adventurers and of German blackguards who have taken advantage of the occupation to terrorise the populations and to promote their own advancement.

You cannot convert Germans into Frenchmen,

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do what you will. The population, if it is genuinely German not only in race but in sympathy, will remain German whatever temporary institutions are set up, and will be animated by one desire—to return to the Fatherland. France will be given a false sense of security. France will be induced to bribe these peoples by offering them special advantages, by forgoing reparations claims upon them, and by supplying them with large funds for reorganisation. France, in concentrating upon the Rhineland and other occupied territories, which she cannot really hold, will let the rest of Germany go, and in the rest of Germany the rubber will be prepared. Nothing can be more perilous for the peace of Europe than the fictitious separation of German provinces from the rest of the Reich.

It is not foreign observers who have pointed out these things. It is the most Nationalist of Frenchmen. General Gouraud told me that in his opinion France owed everything to her unity. To incorporate, or even to regard as allied in some way to France, masses of Germans, would shatter the French cohesion. The millions of Germans who were considered not to be Germans would be a source not of strength but of weakness to France.

These arguments are irrefutable. M. Poincaré beyond question accepted them. But emotionally there was even in Paris a hankering after the break-up of the Reich. Sufficiently strong action, for a multitude of political reasons, was not taken to suppress the mischievous enthusiastic Frenchmen in Rhineland and in the Palatinate who permitted the Separatists to fish in troubled waters. In Paris I saw Dr. Dorten, the leader of the Rhineland Separatists, and his complaint to me was that M. Poincaré had refused to see him. I think that the Paris authorities must be acquitted of deliberate

designs to bring about the disintegration of the German Empire ; but I think that the local French authorities cannot be acquitted of favouring the movement and even lending active support to the movement, and I think that the Paris authorities are to be blamed for not speaking out clearly to their agents, for not definitely making up their minds that the German Separatists and their French aiders and abettors were enemies and not friends.

That is, I think, the truth about the movement which gave rise to most bitter quarrels between France and England. But in other ways the French Government seemed unable to plump for a particular policy. Now and again under the Poincaré régime we heard of political combinations in which a Franco-German entente was the keystone of a Continental *bloc*. But, on the other hand, we heard of many other combinations in Europe which were frankly anti-German. France was to be the centre of a great chain of States stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Before the war there were twenty-six States in Europe. To-day there are more than the number of cards in a French pack of cards. Now the combinations that can be obtained by shuffling a pack of cards are infinite, and any statesman who attempts to play with the pack of States will probably find that he has made the gravest miscalculation. France has shuffled the cards many times. When M. Paléologue was at the Quai d'Orsay, there was formed the scheme of a Danubian Federation, in which Bavaria, Austria and Hungary were included. It was a wild dream. Now the play is somewhat different. France has made loans or given credits to Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and Rumania. Yugo-Slavia has made a Treaty with Italy, and France

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still sometimes thinks of a Latin *bloc* in which Italy should figure.

The Baltic States, it is hoped, will strengthen their association with Poland. Particularly does France reckon upon Poland with whom she has a Treaty, and upon Czecho-Slovakia with whom she recently made a Treaty, regarding Czecho-Slovakia as the leader of the Little Entente. French foreign policy was directed towards the construction of a solid barrier of States in Middle Europe to resist any attack on the integrity of the various treaties of 1919. Between Prague and Warsaw the relations had not always been cordial, but when France, the ally of Poland, became also the ally of Czecho-Slovakia, it was hoped to promote a warmer friendship. The association of Rumania and Poland was also held to strengthen good relations with the Little Entente. It was even suggested that the rôle played by Paris between Prague and Warsaw might be played by Prague between Paris and Moscow. A vast policy, not substantial, which might easily fall to pieces, was involved. The project was built, as most projects of this kind are built, on common fears and common enmities. The Little Entente was afraid of Hungary, and France was afraid of Germany. It was represented that the members of these interlocking alliances were truly democratic countries who were to oppose countries which were not truly democratic. But this contention was difficult to maintain when the French added that they were building the western wing of a great edifice of which the eastern wing would be based upon Russia. France, in short, was to found her security on the support of the Slav peoples.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the multiplication of arms in Central Europe, the conclusion



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of military understandings, are in themselves provocative, although it is always pretended by the interested Governments that they are purely defensive. The nations which are left outside the combinations must themselves strain every effort to arm and to find armed allies.

Europe is divided into armed camps, and if one camp is stronger for the moment, the other camp must set itself the task of redressing the balance; a catastrophe is in sight. The militarisation of Europe means war. About that there can be no mistake. I cannot believe that responsible French Statesmen will, for long, depend upon Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Yugo-Slavia and Rumania. In the last war France had Russia, the whole British Empire, Italy and the United States of America by her side. She certainly loses by the exchange. In a new war Russia would either be neutral or would help Germany. If Russia were neutral, Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and Rumania could hardly be expected to rush to arms against Germany. For Russia does not give up the hope of recovering Bessarabia, which Rumania now holds, and Russia has many claims to make good in Poland. If Poland were occupied with Germany, the chances are that Russia would march on Poland. As for Czecho-Slovakia, if she once stirred, she would realise that a large proportion of her people are Germans by race, while the Magyars are only awaiting their opportunity to strike. In so far as France is building her security on these alliances, she is building upon shifting sand. The odds are overwhelmingly against her. Security is not to be found in antagonism with England, or in antagonism with Germany, who in a few years will have a population which will be almost double the population of France. The statesman who plays these cards is a gambler

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who can hardly fail to lose. Therefore I find it incredible that in the last resort this is the settled policy of France.

Only by international friendships, including the friendship of France and Germany, can the age-long feuds which have devastated Europe be appeased. Only in international friendships and in the abandonment of enmities can the future of France as a first-class Power be assured. It is not in militarism, not in might, that safety lies. It lies in co-operation, in a consciousness of world solidarity, of the interdependence of peoples. The struggle is not between France and Germany, or between France and England, or between any country and any other country. The struggle is between chaos and peace. There is no middle course. France, Germany, England, the United States, Italy, Poland, the Little Entente, Russia, and all other countries, have to make their choice. Is it to be universal peace, or is it to be universal chaos ?

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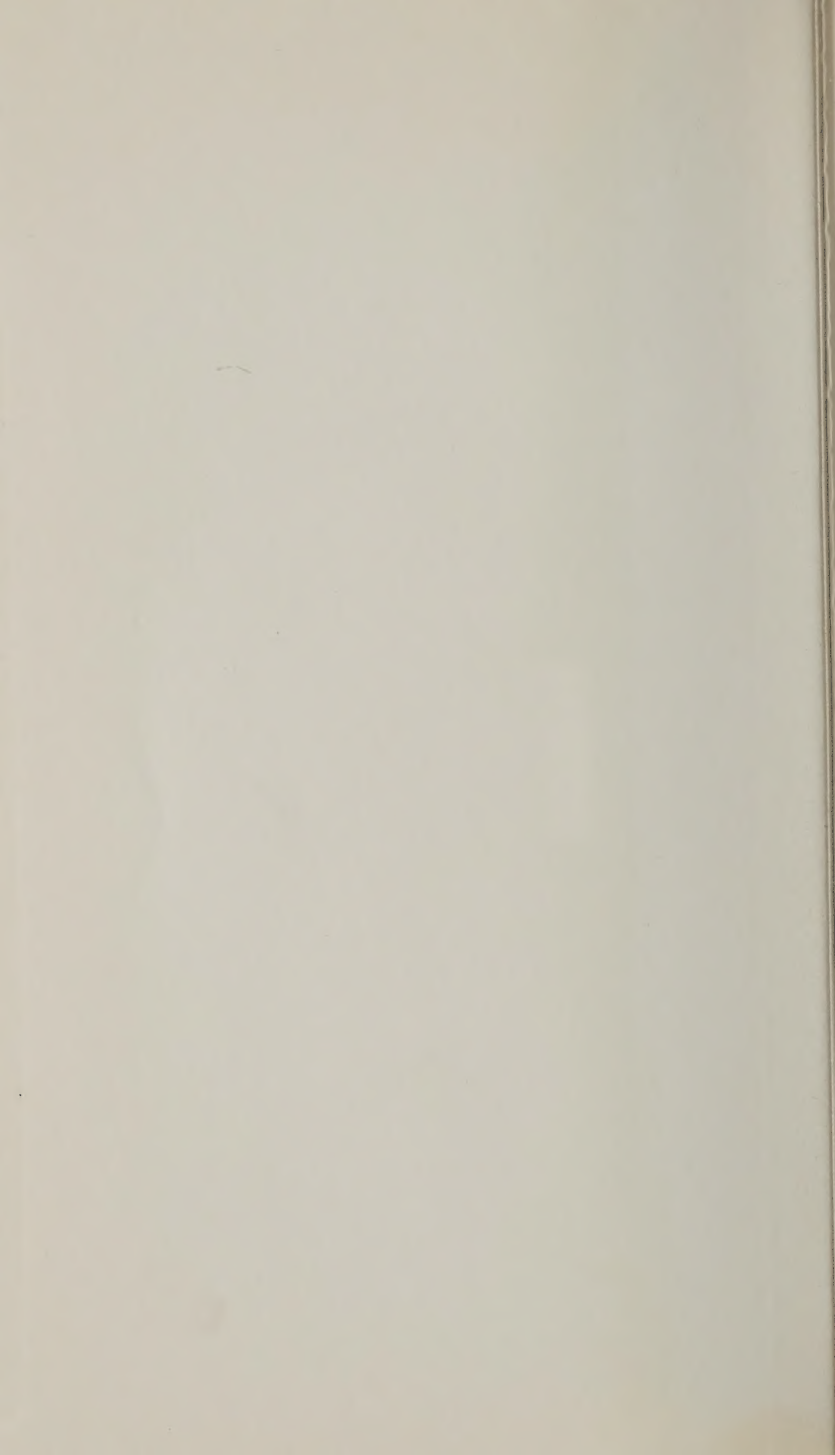
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